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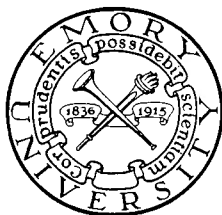
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BY
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"LORD FALCONBERG'S HEIR,"
"WHICH IS THE WINNER,"
"BOX FOR THE SEASON,"
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ETC. ETC.

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CHIPS FROM AN OLD BLOCK.

WHAT THE PANIC DID FOR MY BROTHER
GEORGE.

A SKETCH.

THERE was a panic at the breakfast table. When I came down I found my father in a fit of the blue devils, and my mother not much better. My elder brother was not there, and my sister, the only one out, was probably sleeping off the effects of her last night's amusement. It was the height of the London season; the middle of June; in fact, the week between Epsom and Ascot; and the sun was shining into the breakfast-room, with a successful effort to look in earnest. Everything had a cheerful appearance excepting ourselves.

My father, Colonel Ffolliott, was a most agreeable gentlemanly person upon ordinary occasions; and enamelled our morning meal, which was always a late one, with scraps from the *Times* newspaper, and a running commentary of his own. He was said to have been a *mauvais sujet* in his youth; but had exchanged his wild oats for a

fund of worldly wisdom and general sagacity, He had retained the piquant flavour of the early fruit without any of its deleterious characteristics. He possessed every capacity for enjoyment excepting the means of gratifying it. My mother was a lady of fashion, to a certain extent : and a very pleasant one. She knew everybody more or less ; and went everywhere, as far as one pair of horses and her friends' assistance would allow. Of course she was good-looking still, notwithstanding three grown-up children, of whom I was the youngest ; and two or three more down in the country, I scarcely know which, whom we always forgot up in town ; excepting when we got an hebdomadal letter from the governess to tell us of their welfare, and the magnificence of the strawberry beds which were placed at their disposal. Mrs. Ffolliott read the *Morning Post* daily while her hair was being crimped by her maid ; and her letters, which were numerous and entertaining ; and detailed her experiences, derived from either source, while she sipped her tea, or dallied with the crispest of dried toast. My sister Marion was a handsome clever girl, and my brother George the best fellow alive. Altogether it was a wonderfully pleasant breakfast table to sit down at.

This morning we were dreadfully out of sorts. Something had gone wrong ; and as neither of my parents seemed inclined to enlighten me as to the cause, I was obliged to indulge in conjecture, which I did ; helping its crudity with an excellent *côtelette à la sauce tartare*. I was sure it was not a domestic quarrel, that wretched affliction of the respectable middle-classes. My father and mother had never quarrelled in their lives : they were much too

well bred. Had the wrong man proposed for my sister? Impossible; for my mother kept all detrimentals at arms' length; and she was surrounded by a perfect body-guard of eligibles, the worst of whom would have been an admirable *parti* for a penniless beauty. Perhaps George had committed himself, before my arrival, in some way, for I saw that he had already breakfasted, and was gone out: though, as he was heir to a good fortune, that was not likely. I had just arrived at the conclusion that my tutor had written from Christ Church to recommend country air for three terms to come, when my father, breaking an egg and the silence together, asked me "if I had seen the paper that morning," at the same time handing it to me.

"No, Sir," said I, looking at my mother, who was surrounded by pink envelopes and "at homes;" "No, Sir; have you?"

"Indeed, I have. We shall have to go abroad."

Now it so happened that this was a stereotyped method which my father had adopted for declaring his coming insolvency; but as I already knew something of the habits of Parisian society, and was sure that Mrs. Ffolliott would never get beyond that charming capital, I had ceased to think very mournfully of the alternative proposed. So I took the paper and the announcement without even a sigh.

The first thing I saw was that the winner of the Derby was not likely to go for the Ascot Cup, and as I and my brother were dead against him, I didn't care so much about that. Another princess too was going to be married, and charming as that princess was in my eyes,

I felt it my duty to smother my feelings, which I did, I hope, successfully. "Money lent on personal security at a fair rate of interest; the utmost secrecy observed;" that certainly ought not to have produced the gloom which was around us. Indeed I read it aloud in the hope of dissipating the cloud: alas! without effect.

"Confound it, Charles," at last said the colonel, "how stupid you are, don't you see? Naylor and Smasham have gone for five millions." And true enough, at the head of the column immediately preceding that of the sporting intelligence, was "the gigantic failure of Naylor and Smasham."

"And who the deuce are Naylor and Smasham?" said I, with unfeigned astonishment.

"Who are Naylor and Smasham? why, they're a limited liability company, and have got some of my money. They failed last night it seems by the paper, just before four o'clock, and if you read you'll see what a precious state of things it is. Just ring the bell, and order a cab. I suppose you want the brougham, my dear?"

"Not till five o'clock. We're going to the Horticultural."

"Where is George gone?" said my father after a pause.

"Haven't you seen him? No? Then he has gone down to the Hampton Court sale with Trelawny and Littledale."

"Then you'd better come with me." And in ten minutes more we were on our way to Lombard Street.

East of Temple Bar the crowd was greater than usual;

and as we approached the precincts of the Mansion House, we were reduced to a foot's pace. My father's irritability was not allayed by the necessity of getting out to walk; and certainly the gloomy faces that met us, and the excited representatives of commerce who elbowed their way past us, with curses both loud and deep, some at their own folly, others at the rascality of the world in general and the bankrupts in particular, boded but little satisfaction to the shareholders and depositors in this unfortunate concern.

"How did it happen?" said one gigantic countryman, whose flushed face and overcoat showed him to be a fresh arrival from the provinces in search of information and his money.

"Over-speculation," said his friend, drily. "They've paid you two per cent on your deposits, and lent your money at 7 on bad security to pay themselves."

"This comes of building churches with other people's money: it's buying character very cheaply. If that's the way to heaven the journey don't cost Mr. Naylor much," said a third, coarsely; while his companion, who evidently felt disposed to contradict anybody, remarked that "it was something to think that it hadn't all been squandered by that scoundrel Smasham:" and so we were carried by the crowd towards Lombard Street.

What my father's intention might have been originally in starting for these unknown regions I have no idea. I hardly think he had a very definite one himself; excepting that it was his duty to go elsewhere than to Tattersall's or the club, with some seven or eight thousand in jeopardy in the City. Be that as it may, Lombard Street

itself was scarcely accessible, and as to the banking-house, you might as well have attempted to reach the moon. A crowd of fanatics, who imagined that something might be done for them, were kicking and knocking vainly at the doors. Others were looking hopelessly up at the top window, as if they, Danae-like, expected it to open and disclose a shower of gold, or notes ; or at least the senior partner preparing to sacrifice himself to the offended deities of justice and commercial integrity. He was really lunching on champagne and chicken-salad at home. Seeing the state of things, the colonel turned quickly round, and walked off to his lawyer's ; a process which always appears to give great satisfaction to injured persons, but to me looks like nothing so much as throwing good money after bad, where the "*auri sacra fames*" is to be appeased.

Here we received such consolation as might have been expected. "Doubtless something would be saved for the creditors ; but it was a bad business, and others must follow. Ready and Allcash were very shaky, known to be so some time ago," said the iron-gray counsellor to the family, who was always called into the Ffolliotts whenever a birth, death, marriage, or want of money assailed them.

"Then why the d—l didn't you tell me so ?" said my father, rather testily. "I was very near transferring my private account there not three months ago."

"My dear Colonel Ffolliott, we never talk about business of that kind, excepting under necessity. Bless your heart, a whisper would ruin them now, and every one connected with them."

"You don't seem to see that it might have saved quite as many as it would have ruined."

"That's a different view to take of such obligations, colonel. However, I'm glad it's no worse. We shall be able to judge better in a day or two how things are likely to turn out. In the meantime keep clear of bankers and joint-stock companies of all sorts." With which piece of advice the old gentleman bowed us out, with a mixture of urbanity and deference, which none can assume better than a well-bred family lawyer. As my father's account was always overdrawn, Ready and Allcash, who did not fail this time, got off exceedingly well.

When we got back to town, I mean town as distinct from London, my father had so far recovered his spirits as to remark upon the necessity of giving up something, though he did not seem very well to know what. He thought I might do without a horse at Oxford, and my mother might give up the rest of the season, and let the house until things were a little more settled. As to his own stud, no man could keep up his political influence without riding to hounds occasionally; and the colonel did not see how it could be done on less than four horses.

It is but right to say that there did not seem to be one cloud of regret over the gay world into which we had penetrated. Three more failures of considerable magnitude were reported before we left the City; but there was not visible one carriage the less on that account. The smiles, and nods, and appointments, were just as numerous, and the dinners, balls, concerts, and the opera, as brilliant as if several thousands had not been ruined

that day. Either credit or money was easily attainable at the wrong end of the world now ; or they are under an hallucination who profess to be going eastward when they are in want, as naturally as a man goes south with disease of the lungs.

At five o'clock my brother was standing with two men, Captain Trelawny and Sir Frederick Littledale, in the narrowest part of Bond Street. It was opposite the door of Long's Hotel. They had just returned from the Hampton Court sale, where George Ffolliott had indulged in a rather expensive yearling colt, at about six hundred guineas ; and he was now discussing in one breath the relative value, and the prospect of getting the money to pay for him : or rather, I should say, the percentage he would have to pay for it. His financial position was peculiar ; explicable in about half a dozen lines.

My father was the youngest of three brothers. With the eldest, who had the estate, he quarrelled, as he did everything else in those days, somewhat pertinaciously. Of course he forgot it in process of time, but the squire did not. Being an obstinate person, and finding himself on his death-bed without an heir of his own to succeed him (another source of annoyance), he left the entire proceeds of the property to his widow for her life : and, ignoring the claims of both his own brothers, made George his heir on the death of his aunt. The old lady was at daggers drawn with the whole family ; and employed the latter years of her life in making a nest egg for her own relations. But nothing could deprive George Ffolliott of the ultimate inheritance ; and he made the most of his prospects in the meantime.

He himself was a universal favourite. He had just that sufficiency of good looks, which recommended him at first sight, to society, without creating envy : and gave him self-assurance without one atom of affectation. I never saw a person so little vulgar. For vulgarity has really nothing to do with position, or fortune, or even education ; but is a purely mental disease, which may attack any one. He was now standing outside of Long's ; and as I approached he stopped in the middle of his conversation to greet me.

"Where have you been, Charlie ? "

"Into the City with the governor," replied I, with an exceedingly indifferent tone, considering the purport of our visit.

"Anything doing there ? " enquired Sir Frederick Littledale.

"Yes ; Naylor and Smasham are gone for five millions, and Ready and Allcash—" Captain Trelawny looked serious.

"You don't mean to say ——." I think he would have choked before finishing the sentence, so I relieved his anxiety at once.

"No ; they were all right when we came away ; but the money market is far from healthy."

"Then let's go in and have some sherry : " and we found ourselves in a moment flattening our noses against the other side of the window panes of that most cheerful and much maligned hostelry, the coffee-room of which at that time of day, in the month of June, is divided equally between the flies and the two universities.

The remarks on the passers-by were more entertaining

than flattering to them, excepting in rare cases, when the beauty of horses and of women met with due recognition.

“Who’s this City swell, Littledale, with the high step-pers? there’s a whole saddler’s shop on the horses; and the coachman looks like the Lord Mayor on the ninth of November.”

“Ffolliott can tell you more about him. He’s a Piccadilly money-lender. What he calls the tightness of the market will increase the value of the Newminster colt, George.” George thus personally appealed to, finished his sherry, and his conference with W——m, and came to the window.

At that moment there was a stoppage in the street, and a remarkably neat barouche, with two ladies in it, came to a dead lock exactly opposite the window at which we were all standing. Littledale and Trelawny took off their hats, almost involuntarily; my brother went out, seeing he was recognised, and I followed him.

Barbara Lechlade was the belle of the season. I never saw a prettier girl: scarcely that either: I mean a more beautiful woman. She was but one-and-twenty, and yet her face exhibited that wonderful charm of intelligence or mind, without which a woman may be pretty, but can never be thoroughly beautiful. The large, animated gray eye with its dilated pupil and sweeping lashes; the long narrow nostril, and short curling upper lip, and the mouth and chin full and firm, were models of spiritual beauty, with a due admixture of the material, to make wise men wonder, and fools fall down and worship. George was said to be a great favourite; they were much together; and although I had but few opportunities of seeing them,

I could not help mentally coupling them. I was not more prescient than the rest of the world in which they lived ; for it seemed to be settled that some day or other George Ffolliott and Barbara Lechlade were to be married.

"There's money, Littledale," said Trelawny, as the carriage drove off, and I entered the coffee-room unperceived, leaving George still staring after it as it continued its route down Bond Street. "No chance of a smash there."

"I don't know about that," replied his friend ; "nobody knows. However, I shouldn't mind taking my chance—best-looking woman in London."

"Why don't you go in ? heaps of money."

"Because Ffolliott could give you or me a stone, and win easy."

As I did not know what other family disclosures might ensue, I was seized with a fit of coughing, and a few minutes afterwards we separated.

I believed it to be perfectly true that my brother was first favourite ; that, in a word, nobody would have had a chance with him for the hand of the heiress. My father and mother, I knew, were most anxious for the match ; and although there were plenty of desirable men, who would have been glad to have mended their broken fortunes from the banker's coffers, still my brother's position was such as to have made success probable in any such matrimonial speculation.

Three days afterwards we all went down to Ascot, having taken a house for the week notwithstanding the family bankruptcy. The Lechlades were there too ; and

my brother paid Barbara such marked attention, that it could but end in a proposal. The prospect had a reviving effect upon the drooping spirits of my father; and Mrs. Ffolliott manifestly looked forward to increased facilities for getting rid of her time with a new daughter-in-law. We were riding together in Rotten Row a week after, when we met Miss Lechlade. To my astonishment, as soon as she saw George, she blushed, then turned pale as death, and commenced talking to her companion, Lord Paddington, the greatest fool in London, with a volubility totally at variance with her usual collected manner. My brother took off his hat and rode quietly on, looking at me to do the same, as I was about to turn back, having been accustomed to do so aforetime.

"George," said I, "what's the matter with Barbara Lechlade?"

"How the d—I should I know?" said he, in a voice and with a look which said more plainly than words that he knew all about it. I was very sorry for George, and, discretion being the better part of valour, held my tongue.

At the end of the ride we went out into Piccadilly; and though it was not yet time to dress for dinner, my brother continued his way homewards. I looked at him once or twice, for we were pulled up as usual by the stream of carriages coming out of that convenient corner, the end of Park Lane. He was evidently making up his mind to an effort. His face had lost its open, careless, independent character, and not only anxiety, but a curious perplexity sat on his features: a something I had never seen there before. As he got off at my father's

door, and gave his horse to the groom who was waiting for him, he seemed to have come to a conclusion, for he said, "Charlie, come to my room, there's just time to smoke a cigar before dressing;" and I went in.

He had a communication to make, and it was rather a startling one to me, and made in a peculiar manner.

"Did you notice Barbara Lechlade to-day with Paddington?" He appeared to have forgotten the half dozen words we exchanged in the Row.

"Certainly," said I; "anything wrong?"

"First of all, you must hold your tongue; for you are the only person concerned in the business to whom I ought in honour to divulge what I know. Have you any money in Lechlade's?"

"Not much of course; but by accident I have a couple of hundred: part proceeds of a match at Abingdon, and the remains of my last half-year's allowance. Lechlade has a branch bank at Oxford, so I always pay my few sovereigns in there."

"You'd better draw what you have to-morrow."

I suppose I looked blank at this suggestion, for George added:

"There's no hurry: the next day will do as well; but in these smashes, which we've heard of east of Temple Bar, no one can tell how soon they may come west. You'd better pay your debts, or carry it about in your breeches pocket, than trust it to anybody."

"I thought you always—" I began, for I knew his account was there. "Never mind me; I can take care of myself."

"And that's the reason why Barbara cut us to-day?"

"Humph—well, no; not altogether. She's a good girl, though she won't have me, Charlie." This was news.

"Have you asked her?"

"Yes, I have. I suppose the mother will be annoyed at it; for she's set her heart upon it; and as to me—well—ah! Well, you know it can't be helped—I shall go to Paris, and on to Italy at once." And then I saw how much he suffered in the repetition of what I thought his wrongs; but he went on like a warrior at the stake.

"The long and the short of it is, Charlie, that I grew too fond of the girl; and everybody thinks she is fond of me; but I have nothing to live upon but bills and post obits till that hideous old woman——"

"They're never going to marry her to that fool, Paddington, because he owns half London. She's too good for him without a half-penny."

"No; she is too good for him: but she won't marry me. She won't marry anybody; and her father is a fine old gentleman, an honest, true-hearted, old man, who will be ruined by swindlers."

"How do you know—have you seen him too?"

"Yes, and our interview was short enough. He asked me if I had any settled income or profession—

"'None whatever,' said I, 'excepting the expectations.'

"'And your aunt? for I hear the property is hers for her life.'

"'Is more than healthy, and only sixty-eight,' said I.

"'And I, Sir, if these failures go on, am a beggar,' replied he. 'In confidence I tell you, and in the strictest confidence, excepting as regards your own family, if you

married my daughter to-morrow you would marry a beggar. Time may make a difference ; meanwhile you will excuse me if I tell you that it's impossible.' Then I knew what she meant when she told me that her place for the remainder of his life was with her father."

It was not till some time after that I guessed how much George must have suffered in his interview with his first and only love.

The next day he was abroad. My mother was excessively hurt at what she believed to be indifference to her feelings and intentions for her favourite son. My father grieved over the absurdities of a man who relinquished so easily such pecuniary prospects ; and society said that George Ffolliott was worth a dozen Paddingtons, with the whole of the Indies for his inheritance. I said nothing ; but I was sorry for George and Barbara, knowing the truth ; and awaited the crisis with impatience. I did draw within twenty pounds of my trumpery account ; but I had the modesty to do it with three cheques, at three different times. Within one month Lechlade's had gone ; and three days after Benjamin Lechlade died of apoplexy or paralysis (the world shook its head and said prussic acid), and left his daughter Barbara a beggar.

PART II.

Two years had passed since the failure of the house of Lechlade and Co., and the patient public had received a dividend of fifteen shillings in the pound (mine didn't amount to much : George's three-fourths was a handsome

sum, for he left in all the money he had, and sold the Hampton Court colt at a sacrifice), when there was another panic at our family morning meal. My mother had submitted to the tortures and gossip of her maid, had read her letters, and built upon them ; my sister had again requested to be served in her room (this young lady was engaged to be married now to an excellent *parti* and was therefore worthy of all indulgence) ; I had already reached the ham stage of my breakfast, and was weighing the chances of preferment in the Civil Service of India against those of the Church in my own country, and my father, this time, was positively reading the *Times*, when he suddenly let fall the paper, and started to his feet. It was the first time I ever saw him upset anything. He was proud of never having done so : and now it was but a cup and saucer ; only Worcester, as he consolingly observed.

"What's the matter, my dear," said my mother, "any more banks broke?"

"No, no ; nothing but a cup and saucer. But there, Charlie, read that—by Jove, it's enough to make a younger man than I start."

"Which do you mean, Sir—not the City article?"

"No—the City article ! You young fellows are always thinking about money—look lower down the bottom of the page."

"What !—awfully sudden death in high life ? Who is it, old Lord Cockermouth ? He's outraged Providence by living so long."

"No. Read it out to your mother. It's a short paragraph."

And so it was, and proceeded as follows :

"Yesterday evening, at Flintstone Priory, ——shire, the widow of the late General Ffolliott was, we regret to record, burnt to death. Her maid had not left her many minutes when she was roused by piercing shrieks. She rushed, half-undressed as she was, into her mistress's room, where the butler was already vainly endeavouring to extinguish the flames. It is supposed that this venerable lady was reading by the light of the candles, when some portion of her dress ignited, and caused the fatal accident, as her nightcap of valuable Brussels lace was reduced to a cinder. This magnificent property (not the nightcap) devolves upon Mr. George Ffolliott, eldest son of Colonel Ffolliott, of the Blues : a most popular and enthusiastic sportsman, who is now travelling in the East in search of materials for a history of Nimrod. We know no gentleman in England so capable of doing justice to his subject. Further particulars of the terrible accident in our next. Many families of distinction are thrown into mourning.———*shire Express*."

I read aloud, with tolerable serenity, this paragraph from the pen of the county penny-a-liner, having my own ideas of my brother's reasons for travelling in the East, when a telegram arrived from the family lawyer, announcing the intelligence *av officio*, and requesting the attendance of George on business of importance. As this could not be had, the next best thing was to send my father instead of him. As society was beginning to be dull, he had no objection to the journey ; and left us to finish up a host of visits and shopping preparatory to the event to which my mother had been looking forward ;

but which she now, as a matter of decency, pretended to deplore. To return, however ; when I had finished reading, my mother, always sceptical or suspicious as to the authenticity of news (for she knew the slenderness of the threads on which she sometimes hung her own), said :

“Do you believe it? I don’t ; poor old woman ! I dare say the butler set fire to her. I wonder whether the plate is safe.”

“I’m sorry for the old lady,” said my eldest sister ; “fancy losing all the Brussels lace too ! What an extravagant old woman she must have been ! However, she didn’t care for George, ma dear, so I suppose she got rid of all she could. Perhaps the house is burnt down for George to build up again.”

Then the telegram arrived which set all to rights.

“What a fortunate thing it was for George that he didn’t propose to Barbara Lechlade ; I wonder what’s become of her !” said Mrs. Ffolliott.

“Nobody knows : she went away to her mother’s relations. I hear old Lady Cacklethwaite offered her a home, as companion or something of the kind ; but she preferred going away altogether.”

“Had her relations any money ?” enquired my sister.

“Was the old lady a good temper ?” asked my mother.

How like them both ! My sister never had a shilling, and my mother never had an enemy.

“Neither the one nor the other,” replied I ; “but beggars cannot be choosers : and the last I heard of her was that after giving up the proceeds of the sale to the creditors, and arranging with the surviving partner for

the gradual liquidation of the responsibilities, as far as the assets would go, she left London with her aunt, carrying with her one ten-pound note, and her mother's wedding-ring, which she had worn almost from her childhood."

"Poor Barbara," said my mother ; " how fond I was of her ! But it was a narrow escape for George."

What a barbarous thing is a tender mother !

In one week George was with us. His change of prospects, or rather the fulfilment of his prospects, appeared to make no difference to him. He always seemed to have had just what he wanted, and he was not a likely person to trouble himself about looking for more. I believe he regarded the large fortune left him only as an increased opportunity of making his friends happy. He went down, saw the keepers, made certain preparations for a campaign against the birds, and gave orders for the strictest preservation of foxes, with pheasants ; which his keeper said was incompatible, but which he said he meant to have whether or no ; and he had it. He made an addition or two to his stud—indeed, he began forming a new one : and in ten days he had shaken himself as comfortably into his new position as he ever was in his old one. I think he sometimes missed the excitement of borrowing money. Now he had nothing to do but to pay or spend it.

My mother had a singular fancy for marrying her friends, male and female. It was something to do, and it took an amiable turn : for she always trotted them out, and did some of the courtship herself, as it might be wanted. She was as good as the admiral himself at

making a match. Is it to be wondered at that her own son should claim her best attention? From my brother's knowledge of her character in this way she had never been trusted by him, as I had, in his affair with Barbara Lechlade: and no one knew the truth of that episode but myself. She had now made up her mind that blood would be the essential mixture, instead of money, to create happiness; and it was not long before she had laid her plans and proceeded to act upon them.

"Where are you going, George, for the fortnight or three weeks before the grouse-shooting begins? You can't go to Flintstone, the house is not near dry; and I should think you had had enough of the continent for the present."

"I have never thought about it. Perhaps yachting with Helme, if he asks me. Anywhere: I don't much care." And when I looked at him, I could see a certain languor and indifference to pleasure or society, very unusual with him formerly. Even his stud, which we had been getting together, did not interest him as much as it did me.

"Then you won't mind accepting an invitation, which I could say nothing about yesterday. Lord Glenlivat has a small party in Wales, and asked me whether I thought you would care to go down. As I knew none of your plans, I couldn't tell; but he intends to send you an invitation. The fishing is capital, and the girls and old Lady Glen charming. Tom Stockbridge is going next week." My mother baited her hook remarkably well, for Tom was an excellent judge of racing, and George had a penchant for the sport too.

The next day a letter came from Lady Glenlivat to both of us, and in three days we were on our road to the castle, with flies enough for a Norwegian campaign. As George said, we might as well have been in Cairo for the flies that accompanied us.

Lady Glenlivat was just the sort of connection that my mother, or indeed any mother, would have thought it desirable to cultivate for her sons. The family was old, of the highest respectability and pretension, rich, and influential politically and fashionably, and the shooting and claret quite unexceptionable. The daughters, too, were exceedingly good-looking and popular, cheerful without being fast, and well educated without being blue. The earl was himself the model of a country gentleman as soon as he was out of the atmosphere of the House of Lords.

"Charlie," said my brother, one morning after we had been at Rothelan a few days, "it never occurred to me to ask you why my mother sent me down here, of all places, at the beginning of August; there's nothing to do."

"Don't you know?" said I.

"Certainly not; it wasn't the fishing, surely."

"No: you're down here to be married."

"To which of them?" again enquired he, rather amused at the notion.

"Well! I suppose they're not particular: but I believe my mother meant Lady Mary." I said this rather sheepishly, I felt; for Lady Mary had made an impression, a slight one, upon me.

"And what's to become of Lady Susan?"

"Oh ! she's to wait till next season, I presume ; she's younger."

"But I don't know that I care about Lady Mary ; however, I'll do my best, as you all seem to wish it." And he was turning away.

"Not at all ; pray don't. No. I think nothing could be more ridiculous ; I don't see it in that light at all." I was about adding that it would be heartless in the extreme, to say nothing of the folly, when I found that I was alone.

Every one knows how we get through time in a Welsh castle out of reach of all civilisation but its own. We breakfasted late, and fished with varied success, and rode or drove after luncheon, and visited ruins, Celtic or Cymric remains ; we played billiards with the ladies till eleven, and with one another till one in the morning. Then there were departures and arrivals : men and women we all knew, and here and there country people whom we none of us knew ; and amidst all the changes George stayed on, and I felt bound to keep him company.

Lady Mary Rothelan seemed to be assigned to my brother without any ostensible cause for it but accident. Of course, if there happened to be some man of title to take precedence at dinner, George lost his place ; but they generally got together again, and they were so excessively cheerful that I could not understand any termination to such a state of affairs but one. I had yet to learn that love has its poetic tendency to gloom and despondency, without which its intoxication is of little value.

"Not many neighbours, Lady Glenlivat, about you, apparently," said George one day to the countess as they were driving a large party in the break, to see some waterfall at a little distance from the castle, beyond a walk.

"None whatever : literally none : " just then the road wound round the foot of a lake ; and a small cottage, with a neat garden and lawn sloping down to it, exhibited the first symptom of life that we had seen. It was backed by lovely woods, just then in their most beautiful clothing, and the distant line of blue hills left nothing to be desired in a home landscape.

"How lovely—who lives there ? can nobody tell us ? " said some impatient visitor, looking round, but especially at her hostess.

"Yes ; I think I can : but we scarcely regard old Mrs. Locke as our neighbour. She is a tenant of Lord Glenlivat, and has lived in the cottage for years. She never goes from home in this country, from prudential motives. She is a very good woman, and assists in distributing my lord's charities in the hamlet we are coming to."

"Does she live there alone ? it's rather lonely for the old lady."

"She did till we sent our under-keeper to live in the cottage ; and last year, or the year before, she brought a niece, or a cousin, or somebody, to live with her. Quite a superior person, they tell me about here : but she's just as inaccessible as the old lady."

"Then she's young, is she, my lady ? " said George Ffolliott.

"Yes, and beautiful, I hear : but we are only here for the autumn, and as she never has been to the castle, and retreated on the only visit we have had occasion to pay at the cottage, I have never seen her."

"That's a great temptation ; a young and beautiful woman with a mystery attached to her, in such a spot."

"You'd better try to solve it, Mr. Ffolliott," said Lady Mary, in the most good-humoured indifferent manner possible, which, as I imagined, denoted the most intimate terms, and made me uncomfortable for the rest of the drive.

"So I will," said he, "but you must stimulate me by a bet."

"Then, Mr. Ffolliott," said she, "I'll bet you any present you like to the value of five pounds, that you don't make the acquaintance of the young lady ; I mean so as to exchange greeting of any kind with her, within a fortnight of this time."

"Done, done ;" and the bet, though not booked, was certainly considered as made.

In two or three days it seemed to be forgotten. We ceased to allude to the subject, and my brother went on smoking and fishing, and, as I thought, flirting with Lady Mary Rothelan more than ever. He was quite unmolested, and, with the privilege of a man with ten thousand a year, did very much as he liked. His absences were noticed, but not remarked upon ; while we were always wanted as squires of dames, and had scarcely a minute to ourselves.

"When are you going into Scotland, George?" I asked

him. "To-day's the 10th, and I suppose you don't want to be much later than the 14th."

"Well, the earl asked me to stay and shoot his moors here : he says he hasn't much grouse-shooting ; but mine will keep in Scotland, so I've arranged to have another week of it. By-the-way, if you like, you can go up to Scotland, and I'll come on from here."

I didn't particularly care about going alone, and so I told him.

"You used to be keen enough. You young fellows get spoilt nowadays. However, as you please. I thought it might bore you to stay."

Then he took to riding alone in the afternoons ; and three times in the following week was absent, on a hack of the earl's, from soon after breakfast till just as the dressing bell rang. Female curiosity could not be silent any longer.

"Mr. Ffolliott, I have been deputed to ask, if it's not an inconvenient question to answer, why all the ladies are deprived of your society lately for so many hours? Three days this week we have seen nothing of you, on the lake, nor at the castle, till dinner time. As we begin shooting to-morrow, and the ladies bring out the luncheon, perhaps we may be more fortunate." So spake Lady Glenlivat.

"I fear not, my lady ; I am engaged to-morrow."

"Is it indiscreet to ask where?" said her daughter.

"Not in you, Lady Mary. If you'll give me a day or two more to myself I think you will owe me five pounds."

My brother said this seriously, and blushed ; Lady Mary and the rest of us laughed.

"The mysterious lady ! I really quite forget. Your explanation is most satisfactory."

The next day my brother did not shoot ; but went out with his rod. The day after he shot—very badly for him : and, upon the earl asking him what he would like to do the following day, he begged permission to take a beat of his own, accompanied only by a boy and one dog. He at the same time backed himself to kill more than Tom Stockbridge, who had been severe on his shortcomings. So my brother managed to get what he wanted—another day or two to himself.

At length our visit was really coming to a close. Most of the guests were gone, and the evening before our departure we had quite a sociable party. I began to feel how very much I liked Lady Mary, and to be exceedingly grateful to my brother for disappointing the expectations of, possibly, two families : certainly of one. In a word, I was desperately in love with her ; and regretted the time I had wasted in helping my brother's cause, which ought to have been used in forwarding my own. I was of a very sanguine temperament however, and vowed to lose no further opportunities : so when Lady Glenlivat expressed a wish that I should repeat the visit on my return from the North, I cordially accepted the invitation, and determined that my stay in Scotland should be as short as decency would allow.

"Mr. Ffolliot, we have not yet settled our bet. I believe I have won, or we should have heard something more about the mysterious lady."

"I think you will be obliged to confess that I have won. I have made the lady's acquaintance, and will present her to you if you have any doubt."

"And is she as charming as they say?"

"I think so. Some day you shall judge for yourself. If I perform my promise may I make a stipulation about the wager?"

"Undoubtedly," said Lady Mary, handing me her cue to chalk, while she remained absorbed in her conversation.

"Then," said my brother, "if ever I marry, you shall present my bride with some little present of the value agreed upon, which she will appreciate for your sake;" and he bowed formally.

"Very politely said, and agreed to: but you have not won yet."

"Yes I have, and you shall admit it before long." Having finished her game with me, we separated for the night.

I said there were no guests left but ourselves: so we sat down in the smoking-room, alone for the first time during our visit.

"George, I'm afraid the result of our journey to Rothelan Castle will not satisfy Mrs. Ffolliott."

"Then she's a most unreasonable mother, Charlie;" and for the first time I noticed how bright and well he looked, and how much more cheerful he had been the last three or four days.

"Why unreasonable? I told you what she sent you for."

"You did: and I'm going to obey her. I am going to be married."

I don't know exactly how I looked : I know how I felt : very uncomfortable about the roots of the hair, and very much as if the cigar was disagreeing with me.

"And Lady Mary," stammered I, faintly, "what did she say?—of course you spoke to her?" I still had a faint hope, a very faint one.

"No, I did not. I don't see what she has to do with it, excepting to pay the five pounds."

"Why, you don't mean to say——" Hope was faintly reviving.

"I mean to say that the mysterious lady is going to be my wife ; and as my mother sent me here to get married, she can't complain."

"Confound it, George, I don't know about that. She may be a very good sort of woman, but I should think you ought to know something about her before——"

"My dear Charlie, I know all about her, and so do you : and two years ago my mother and father were very angry because I did not marry her. The mysterious lady is Barbara Lechlade."

My cigar fell out of my mouth on to the ground, where I allowed it to lie for some seconds while George finished his story.

Barbara had come down to her aunt, after her father's death, to unite her mite to the poor old widow's ; that thus they might assist each other through a world which one had left years before, and from which the other had been driven by misfortune. To avoid recognition, she adopted her aunt's name ; and as she had known Lady Glenlivat in town, she had kept out of the way upon the one formal visit which had taken place at the Cottage. George had

had no difficulty in finding out Barbara Locke to be Barbara Lechlade; but to persuade her to change her name once more was not so easy a matter. However, it was accomplished at last; and he wrote to his mother from Scotland the result of his visit at Rothelan.

"Now, Charlie, I'll tell you what you shall do to console my mother."

"What's that?"

"You shall marry Lady Mary, and we'll get Lord Glenlivet to make something of you, without going to Calcutta."

So Mrs. Ffolliott was consoled; for these things positively came to pass next season. She married her two sons: and, regarding the match in a commercial point of view, the right women fell to the right men. George and Lady Mary would have been superfluously prosperous, and I and Barbara ridiculously impecunious. The panic did not do so much mischief west of Temple Bar after all. Lady Mary Ffolliott paid her sister-in-law, but I think the wedding-bracelet cost something more than a fiver.





COUSIN TOM AND THE NEW CURATE.

A SKETCH.—PART I.

DR. DELAPRE is a relation of ours, and one of the most agreeable persons of my acquaintance. He was once, some years ago, before all this nonsense was talked about examinations and open competition (as if real jam ever was meant by Providence for open competition), a Fellow of All Souls. In an evil hour he fell in love, or he would have enjoyed that *otium cum dignitate* still, instead of the yearly income of Decuma Magna cum Parvis ; a sorry exchange, inasmuch as it entailed the necessity of marriage and its results. I never could understand why the doctor, who fulfilled to the letter the statutes of the society to which he belonged, by being *benè natus*, *benè vestitus*, and *moderatè doctus*, should have run his head into such a noose as matrimony. I presume he foresaw the changes that time must bring, of putting the moderation on the first two qualifications—birth and breeches—and of converting the positive into the superlative degree to apply it to the last. The college butler said it was the last batch of port, which warned him to be off ; its full and fruity flavour re-

minding him less of times that had been than of those which were to come. I happened to know that the finishing touch was put by the election of a man, whose father was a bishop, it is true, but whose grandfather had kept a pawnbroker's shop in Holywell Street. My respected relative was too much of a gentleman to give this reason where it could possibly reach the ears of the *benè doctus* and *malè vestitus* parvenu; so he fell in love instead. I have said in an evil hour: perhaps I am wrong.

The wife he got in exchange for his *célibat* was a very handsome woman and excellent mother, which we have so frequently heard to be the divine mission of woman. I do not entirely believe it. Old maids, when backed by a genteel competency, make the best aunts; but what married woman would ever have been allowed to publish—or—or—. Well, never mind what, Mr. Publisher: the moral of them is not less English than their grammar. The living he got in exchange too for his Fellowship was a good one; one of the best, or he would not have been tempted to desert his monastic severities and seclusion for the genial sphere of county society. Then, too, let me ask, in a spirit of playful enquiry, what's a boot to a wooden-legged man, or a hat without a head to put in it, or a stable without a horse? About the same as a good parsonage with a nursery and no child to embellish it. The Reverend Spencer Delaprè was thirty when his first daughter was born, and only four years older when his third and last came into the world. Alice, Edith, Constance: three charming names, and when our story opens three charming girls, in the first blush of womanhood, much given to good dressing and croquêt.

There can be no doubt that the doctor, among other excellent qualities, had a just appreciation of his fellow-creatures. He adored and adorned good society. If you ask old Lady Blandish, she will tell you that there is no greater gentleman in the world than the doctor. The old lady does not mean that villanous abuse of the word which is unfortunately too common, and which begins and ends with straight light hair and extreme quiet of demeanour ; so that the modern gentlemanly man usually looks as great a fool as he is. But she means by "gentleman" a man of polished manners, good presence, some learning, a taste for art (or a pretended one), and of a playful fancy, with which to embellish his ordinary conversation. To be sure, Lady Blandish does not care much about the moral characteristics of her models. She never asks whether they get in debt, which Doctor Delaprè does not, or whether they are very strict in the performance of much self-imposed duty, which the doctor also is not ; whether they are self-restraining, devout, forgiving, and considerate, which latter, indeed, my relative is—for himself, and all who belong to him.

It ought to be recollected that nearly forty years ago, when the doctor took orders, this world, whatever may have been the case with the next, was differently arranged, especially for parsons. He came into it with the most orthodox notions. He had not changed ; he was not in fault ; it was they. The people, the bishops, the very ministry itself. At all events, church patronage went, as it still goes, in all sorts of ways ; and a diocese may be had to-morrow, if there should chance to be a vacancy, without having edited a Greek play, or turned

Old Mother Hubbard into Latin elegiacs. What the doctor's catechism had been was simple enough. Any man could see that by his carving: an useless accomplishment now. He was to assist the squire's lady in her household entertainments, to play whist, sixpenny points, with the squire, or a hit at backgammon when there were no third or fourth hands; to help to shoot the covers at stated intervals; to confine himself within the limits of twenty minutes on Sunday; and if need be, and the Fates were propitious, to marry the squire's daughter, if nothing better turned up for her. It is true Doctor Delaprè had done nothing of these things, because he had been ordained on his Fellowship, and had never had them to do. But this was his creed, and he was ready to act up to it, as far as circumstances permitted, when a young man; indeed, he partly looked for it in his coadjutors, all excepting the daughters; and had the curates been worth the trouble, he would have had an eye to his own. He was pretty well the squire of the parish as well as the parson; so that he did nothing very unorthodox in looking for eligible bait of that sort for his own reservoir.

Just now he wanted a curate, and he had been so long without finding what he wanted, that he began to conceive the project of accepting what he could get.

"Have you found a curate, papa dear?" said his eldest daughter, a dark-haired, handsome girl, who, having but little taste for the modern pattern, either hairy or otherwise, was not afraid to ask the question point-blank.

"No, my dear, I have not; but here's a letter strongly

recommending a gentleman. He's a widower, but he has the highest testimonials."

"That's against him, Sir," said Miss Edith.

"What? his testimonials? They're from my friend the Bishop of——"

"No, no; I mean his being a widower. If he's any family he won't find room in the cottage," replied the young lady. "Besides, the bishop owes us something eligible. I do believe he sends his old fogies here on purpose that I mayn't fall in love with them."

"Why so, Edith?" enquired her father, looking perplexed.

"Because years ago he promised to provide for my husband if ever I married a clergyman: he said he should so pity the poor man: it was when I had been teasing him. He was only a dean then."

"How is it, papa, that you can't find a curate you like now? I am sure Mr. Beauclerc and Mr. Primrose were very cheerful, gentlemanly men."

"There's a strike among the curates," said the doctor, "so I must take the bishop's recommendation. He has one little girl only, I hear, so the cottage will do. I dare say he's a very good fellow, and perhaps the bishop will have to provide for Edith after all."

As the curate in question lived a long way off, and did not write at all as if he enjoyed the amusement of coming a hundred miles to be looked at, and as the rector was just as averse to going the same distance to look at him, that desirable part of negotiation, a personal interview, was omitted. Besides, Dr. Delaprè had a weak side even in the matter of curates, and a bishop's recom-

mendation, when strong enough and to be depended upon, was one of them. So after two or three more letters, which were as highly satisfactory as a Queen's Speech or a diplomatic despatch (for they told nothing on either side but the stipend, which was liberal), the affair was concluded, and the new curate was to arrive at a given time.

But a far greater fish was about arriving in the waters of Decuma Magna cum Parvis, with whose advent neither the ladies nor the rector had much to do. The chapter of accidents, anxious as usual to favour worthy people, was alone to be blamed or praised, for sending a cousin. By the way, this same thing which the wicked call luck, and the good Providence, never seems to do much for those who most trust it. When a man goes to work to help himself in spite of luck or Providence, he appears to alight on his legs; but I know nothing so utterly descriptive of "coming to grief," in devout phraseology, as "trusting in Providence." It is the father of idleness, and apparently a father who never works for his children. As to luck, I do not believe in it at all, unless it mean pure hazard. I quite believe that there are mouths and there are loaves, but not made for one another, for the loaves fall just where the mouths are not, or else when they are so full as to find no room for more.

Now Providence, or luck, or the chapter of accidents, had sent a cousin to England exactly at this time, who ought to have been working hard in India, to all ordinary intents and purposes. Cousin Tom had been an intimate friend of mine, and a *plus mauvais sujet* it would have been difficult to find, as far as his cousins were concerned.

As to his uncle, it never entered his head that it was a gentlemanly thing to provide for his nephew, where any other means of getting rid of him could be found ; and as to encouraging his visits ! — why, hadn't he a duty to perform by his daughters since the loss of their mother ? The event had affected the doctor very much at the time : but he has got over it so nicely that I quite forgot to mention it. Well, Tom Barnett, as you will admit, when you know how he lived and came to man's estate (no other estate being at hand for him), and went out to India, and now came back again, was not so eligible a nephew as a man might have selected ; that is, from the mass of nephews who are always on the look-out for respectable uncles. First of all young Tom, as a little boy, had enjoyed the advantages of a rich father in India, who had married a half-caste. He was sent to a Turkey-carpeted sort of place at Brighton, where he had thin bread-and-butter and dry socks as often as necessary ; jam on his bread more frequently than it was necessary ; and a good licking not half so often as was necessary ; the Reverend Jeremiah Plush not dealing in birch to those who could afford to go without it. His uncle (there were no cousins then) was tolerably civil to the boy during the vacation, but hated the very sight of him : and no wonder. Then he went to Harrow, which wrought a most beneficial change ; for he was thrashed for everything ; even for being dark-complexioned (which was his mother's fault, poor woman !) ; they called him Nigger, and the blacks were rather at a discount then : though since their bloodthirsty proceedings in Jamaica they have risen to a high place in the estimation of the philanthropists. When he left

Harrow, whether it was the change of diet, or system, or the thrashings, I cannot tell, but a more honest, liberal, handsome, good fellow than Tom Barnett I never saw.

His father, as I have told you, was a rich man at that time; and his uncle, who had come into residence at Decuma Magna, and his three little girls and his handsome wife, had become exceedingly civil. Altogether things looked rosy with Tom Barnett.

Within a few years, and I am speaking of only a few years ago, it had become the fashion to finish what ought to have been a gentleman's education by some twelvemonths or more of a private tutor. The reason is obvious; the Duke of Wellington, I mean the Hero of Waterloo, got it into his head that subalterns ought to know how to spell; and as spelling, with English history and geography, with French, mathematics, and the use of the clay pipe, could not be included in the public school curriculum at 200*l.* a year, it was absolutely necessary to go elsewhere for it. In consequence of this, I, for instance, was put down in a village in a north-western county, at the house of a crammer, or tutor, or coach; for he was known by all three "*sobriquets*," according to the estimation in which he was held by the speaker. If there be anything derogatory in the first or last, I beg to repudiate it; for a better fellow, a sounder scholar, a more orthodox Churchman, it would be difficult to meet. Still there is a something in the first, at all events, which carries with it an unworthy implication, and a freedom in the last—an university provincialism perhaps—which augurs less of respect than we feel for the tutor.

It was at this place that I found my friend, Tom Bar-

nett, with four or five others of different characters and capabilities; but all, like myself, turned out from a career of youthful delinquency to be holy-stoned, or polished into shape, in the few months that remained to us.

In some cases a whisper is perhaps the loudest voice in which you can speak. It is so in a country village or town, which may be likened to a whispering gallery. It conveys the sound unerringly to the most distant corners; not unfrequently with a great exaggeration of noise and matter. In the present case, there was a great deal of truth in what was said, and it reached my ears from unimpeachable testimony, as it had already the ears of my "collaborateurs." This latter word is an euphemism, but conveys my meaning, with a compliment to myself. Tom Barnett had been there longer than was usual with young men. He must, by his appearance, have been at least twenty; considerably older than any of us. His habits, too, were different; for he neither drank beer at the public-houses, drew caricatures in church of the rector or his curate, nor missed lecture to attend a cock-fight, for which amusement the neighbourhood was rather famous. All this one could have forgiven. But then he neither boated nor played cricket with us. He was a member neither of the Jolly Anglers, nor the Round Robins, nor was he the owner of a highly-bred terrier, kept for the pleasure of fighting or rat-hunting at so much a dozen; say six shillings to "us gents:" and "the sport was cheap at the money," and for this we did not like him; it took a little time to reconcile me to my convictions, for I

found out afterwards what a really good fellow he was, and the secret of his untoward and unaffected melancholy.

His father, at all times an eccentric person, I believe, after his mother's death had become more than ever speculative and erratic. A year or so after Tom Barnett's removal from Harrow to our tutor's, at Cramfield, funds had begun to be irregularly transmitted, then to cease altogether, until eventually it became clear to Tom's tutor, that the boy must be turned adrift, or must finish his education upon speculation. Letter after letter was sent to Mr. Barnett, but without eliciting a reply; and Tom himself began to be seriously alarmed at his father's continued silence. Independently of his natural anxiety, he was much distressed at the position in which he was placed towards his tutor: and an application to his uncle, the late Fellow of All Souls, though successful in procuring a present supply for himself, did nothing towards guaranteeing any definite supplies for educational or fitting-out purposes. Rather the reverse; for had not the late Fellow become a married man with three children and the demands of a wife and a parish upon him? Had he not a position in the county to maintain, and could it be done if he recognised the claims of a nephew of twenty, who was bent on a civil appointment in India, and the needful amount of funds for the acquisition of this purpose? and what a broken reed was that precious brother of his wife, who had made three fortunes and lost them again; who had passed a year or two among the native Caffres, on horseflesh and split peas; and was now as likely as not to have joined a Mahomedan corps in

the Punjaub, after having irretrievably ruined himself by an unsuccessful monopoly of Indian cotton. There was nothing to be got by any such guarantee, and Dr. Delaprè was purely orthodox, and not disposed to play the Samaritan. If Tom had been the squire's son it might have been different, to be sure ; but Tom's father was the second brother of Mrs. Delaprè, not the first ; and, like all second sons without expectations, a bit of a scapegrace. To be just to the doctor, the man's own family had never taken to him very kindly ; what with his marriage, and his sudden losses rather than his gains, and his eccentricities, he had made a mess of it : and young Tom shared in the disgrace of his father, more or less, according to times, which were now very bad.

So Tom took to reading instead of cricket ; he realised his situation, which is a great thing, and the Jolly Anglers and Round Robins saw him no more. He shut himself up with his books : and though he was decently civil to us all, he was intimate with none, excepting me, and that intimacy would not bear the name of friendship. His sorrows were guessed at, after a time, and his motives respected, as they should have been, by those who got so far down in conjectural analysis. He became moderate and self-restraining in all matters connected with our domestic arrangements ; and I have seen old Grant, as we called him, though he was not old at all, watch him with a mournful interest, as he declined to join in any general excursion or recreation which entailed expense. Minnie, a little girl, Grant's only child, was his playfellow ; and as he was necessarily more at home than we were,

we felt no jealousy that he had become the companion of his tutor and the little girl, almost to our exclusion.

"So you're off to-morrow, Charlie," said he to me, the night before I was to go into residence at Oxford; "I dare say you think me a very queer fellow, and so I am; but I don't mind telling you the reason, and I hope we shall meet some day when I sha'n't be ashamed of it."

He said these words with a feeble attempt at a smile, but with a little bashfulness of manner and a trembling voice, whilst I wetted the cigar I was smoking, and pretended to twirl the leaf round in my fingers, an operation by which I escaped looking at him.

"I dare say you think me a very queer fellow for never going out, boating, or larking, as I used to: but, you know, I'm forced to read hard now, and—and—so——" Here he rather came to a halt, so I felt bound to help him, which I did with a lie, for which I hope I shall be forgiven.

"Not at all, Tom: you're quite right: we all said so: the examination's a stiff one."

"Well, it isn't quite that. I should like to tell you the truth, only don't tell the other fellows. I know that Grant has been put to very heavy expenses for me. I haven't seen my father since I was a boy, and as to my uncles and aunts, they don't care to do anything for me, except give me a dinner, and not always that. I know we must owe Grant a great deal of money, and he can't afford to lose it. So, as my uncles won't pay, and my father can't, I suppose—for I've never heard of him this two years—I've undertaken to do it myself. At first

Grant wouldn't hear of it. He behaved like a trump, in the kindest and most liberal way in the world ; but now that it's gone on such a time, I couldn't stand it. I should have run away, or done something, but for his kindness. I'm to go to India if I get through ; and I have sworn that I'll slave night and day till I pay him every farthing, and something handsome besides, if it was only for that darling little Minnie, whom I love as if she were my sister." Here he blushed, although there was no great need for it, as the young lady was only fourteen. Then we took leave of one another for the night ; and the next day he said, as I got into the fly to go down to the railway : "Well, good-bye, old fellow ; give us a line now and then, and you shall hear from me when I've anything in India worth telling, if I only get well through this confounded examination." His confidence in himself was increasing, and this confidence reposed in me had had a beneficial effect upon both of us ; for I learnt to respect him, and then all my old liking came back. I was uncomplimentary towards his uncles in my language, one of whom was a distant connection of my own ; and wished I could have afforded to lend him the money on the spot, which, indeed, I could not.

For some time we lost sight of one another. An occasional letter passed between us ; but it was a very occasional one. The last two, before he went to India, and I went in for my "smalls," were remarkable only for their total discrepancy. Mine detailed the best five-and-thirty minutes I had ever seen with Drake, and in which I gave him to understand that I was anywhere but "out of it ;" and his gave me a full account of his successful

examination, and the high hopes with which he was about to sail.

From that time I heard little of Tom Barnett. I took my degree, with some difficulty—the Right Hon. R——L—— was one of the examiners that year—and then I migrated into the country, where I shot snipe and rode to hounds. For a year or two I forgot my old friend and his aspirations. My tutor kept up a desultory correspondence with me, and I saw something of my distant relations, the Delaprès. No man could have lived in ——shire without it. At last I heard from Tom: a long confidential letter, considering our acquaintance and uninterrupted silence. He had plenty to tell. His father had been heard of—thousands of miles up the country, in the North-West Provinces—while Tom was working hard in Calcutta. They had never met; nor at that distance, “*Intervalla vides humanè commoda*,” were they likely to do so. He was aide-de-camp to some rajah, who loved fighting better than obedience, and is supposed to have carried all his wealth upon his person. At all events, none of it found its way to Tom, who continued steadily plodding, now in the collectorate, now a stipendiary magistrate; at one time studying the people, at another their dialects. He evinced so much more than ordinary common sense, that he was considered much too capable to be taken out of a subordinate department. The collection of the taxes is the first consideration, and the administration of justice was to be committed to the fools. The latter part of Tom Barnett’s letter was highly characteristic of his old form. “Never mind, I’ve done what I want. I’ve lived like a Pariah; I’ve avoided all tempta-

tion to better myself, as the kitchen-maid at Grant's was always proposing to do ; and only two months back I forwarded to England a sum of money which covered all my expense, and something more, I hope ; though I never shall repay our old friend for his kindness. What a genius for speculation he must have had when he trusted me ! He's quite thrown away in a country village. His venturous nature should have been in the market or on the Bourse. I haven't sat on a stool, or opened a book, or done anything like work, since I paid the money. The first day after, I went out pig-sticking, then I moved up to the jungle for a week's tiger-shooting—I've a skin for you—and since then I've been pretending to visit my collectorate, but I don't mean to begin again till next month. I wonder what Minnie will think ! I suppose you've been to see them ever so many times." "*Supposition très forte, Milord,*" said I to myself as I finished his letter.

PART II.

FOR a long time after this nothing was heard of Tom Barnett or his father. They seem to have disappeared from the scene. Their friends and relations ceased to wonder what had become of them ; and as those were few in number, it is not surprising that those attached to them by no bonds should have long ceased to enquire after them. One's friends do forget one, most inexplicably, in absence. A really good warm heart is so capacious in its affections, and so gracious in its expansion,

that it soon finds new objects for the exercise of its powers ; and what we who are not gifted in this way esteem a radical defect, is in truth a virtue. At all events the position may be defended. A man's enemies now are not half so forgetful. I have known constant enquiries to be made after a subaltern, who had gone abroad, by a Jew whom he was said to have scandalously ill-treated in an affair of money ; always a sore point with these successors of the patriarchs. At this present moment the most affectionate interest is being felt in a young fellow who sailed for Sydney a great many months back, by a man who ought to have forgotten his very existence ; for he behaved most disgracefully to him, by borrowing his money, and proposing marriage to his daughter. His own family have ceased to mention his name ; and he has not a friend upon earth, to judge by their silence. The very house-dog has left off his wailing, and would not recognise him in his newly-adopted beard and moustaches, an ornament more honoured by the disguise that it lends than the improvement it imparts. It has been suggested, in this latter case, that a writ for the money, and an action for breach of promise, have something to do with this affectionate remembrance ; but the very hopelessness of the case forbids us to rely upon this reasoning. There was one of Tom's acquaintances, to be sure, who still took a lively interest in his proceedings, and this was his old tutor. Mr. Grant occasionally enquired of him by letter of his successes ; of his business ; of his "whereabouts." The latter I knew nothing about, and not much of the former. For my last letters had miscarried, and Tom had never written to me at all. I had

been too singularly, culpably indifferent on the subject of Minnie. At the end of seven years I did hear of him ; and I carried my intelligence where I thought it ought to be welcome, considering the first wants of a family of daughters.

“How are you?—delighted to see you,” said the rector, squeezing my hand, and addressing me with a *bonhomie* that is only used towards favoured guests or successful authors. “Anything new in the country?”

Well, there was nothing new in the country ; there never is, that I can make out ; and ours is permanently barren in that respect : so I confessed that there was nothing new. “Hundsden’s collar-bone is better, and he has promised to sell the Warrior, as his wife insists upon it.”

“Of course, quite right too ; that’s the third fall he has given him,” replied Dr. Delaprè. Here two of the young ladies entered the room.

“I don’t know,” said I ; “he’s one of the best horses in the country ; very fast, and exceedingly clever, only a little hard to hold.”

“Yes, yes, very true ; but then poor Mrs. Hundsden ! one must have some regard to her feelings.” It was understood, and tolerably well authenticated, that the rector of Decuma Magna had had very little consideration for the late Mrs. Delaprè. Here the last of the young ladies came in and saluted me.

“If this weather lasts, we shall soon have summer here ; have you begun cricket yet, Mr. —— ?” said Alice, the oldest.

“Not yet. Our opening day is next Monday.”

"And what are you going to do about the archery this season?"

"We shall give up the ground to you three days in the week. That's where the more brilliant triumphs are always obtained;" and I bowed all round.

"*Farceur, comme toujours,*" said Miss Edith, who affected the French tone; and it became her exceedingly well.

"I hope we shall often have the pleasure of witnessing your skill during the summer;" and again I made a general sweep.

"Not mine, I can assure you," said Miss Constance, a charming girl of about nineteen, of the Dudu pattern, "it's much too warm. Besides you, or Captain Archer, are sure to get the prizes."

"*Victorem victæ,*" said I, unconsciously returning to Eton and Ovid.

"Now, papa, what's that? I'm sure it's something he doesn't dare to say in English," said one of the Graces, I forget which.

"Very likely, my dear; something too complimentary. He's been to town lately and touched up his manners——"

"And his Latin too. I wish he would give us a translation. Is town very full?"

"Not yet. The people are only just coming from the country."

"Then you saw none of your friends," said the rector, who was above knowing the winter settlers, unless it might be a member of parliament here and there.

"No, I think not. Though, by-the-way, I did see an

old acquaintance of mine, who enquired after you. I met Tom Barnett."

"Tom Barnett!" said the old gentleman, with as much surprise as could well be expressed on so smooth a brow. And the young ladies, who had doubtless heard the early history of Cousin Tom, re-echoed the sentiment and the surprise.

"And what in the name of fortune brought him back to England? I fear he's but a *mauvais sujet*, not likely to do much good for himself. I was in hopes he was settled in India."

"So he was; but he seems to dislike living there, and talks of winding up his affairs, and living in England."

"Does he? how like his father! I suppose the winding up won't give him much trouble?" And the rector smiled, though not as if he felt much pleasure at the intelligence.

"Well, he rather seemed to think it would."

"Some scrape, I'm afraid—his poor father over again."

"I never had the pleasure of Mr. Barnett's acquaintance: and as he has been dead about eight months, I'm not likely to make it now," said I, waiting for a further opportunity, which, after some more conversation on parish matters and a projected wedding, came off.

"You didn't hear any further particulars, I suppose, of Mr. Barnett's late career? for we've not heard of him for years."

"Tom said something about his having returned from the north-west with some money, which he invested in a lucrative concern in Calcutta." The rector and the rector's daughters became equally attentive. "And Tom

seems to have turned it to good account, for he brought over nearly a hundred thousand pounds, and is looking for an eligible investment. If he goes back, he says it will be to dispose of some valuable property of his own, which pays him about two thousand a year, independent of the rest." The smile that played now upon the family features was a more benignant one; and the young ladies at all events, I won't swear to the rector, responded in chorus, not Tom Barnett, but—"Cousin Tom."

"Alice, my dear, let's have luncheon; you'll want something after your ride." And I did take luncheon. It was a very cheerful meal, and before I went away, I was glad to see that my friend and very distant relative had learnt the name of the hotel in which Tom Barnett was staying.

A man with three daughters, all tolerably good-looking, has a great advantage over his neighbours with a lesser or a greater number. There is something mystical in the number three: and a moderate share of beauty goes a great way. There is less room for criticism and more for general admiration. They are sure to be called the Graces, or, as an Irishman said, the Muses, who only come out three at a time in wet weather. I never heard them called the Fates or the Furies. They go into the world with a certain prestige, which never deserts them till one happens to get married. Now, this was the case with Delaprè and his daughters. There was no more imposing sight in the country than to see this ecclesiastical aristocrat walk up the ball-room with three well-dressed, handsome girls. They would have

been missed in a moment, too, at any archery meeting, or croquêt party ; and as to ordinary society, there was always one to be found to remind you of the other two. I have seen only daughters, much handsomer than any of the rector's, walk through the room with far less *éclat*, whatever real advantages they might derive from that *auri sacra fames* which comes with matutinal reflection.

These three girls were not beauties. They were simply good-looking ; but made the most of it. They were always well dressed ; knew the advantage of a good toilette, free from tags and rags, which may be said to belong to the threepenny ribbon style, and which can be imitated by the young women at the draper's with eminent success. First impressions were greatly in their favour ; and as they were clever, lady-like (and with a shrewd sense of good-natured humour), exceedingly entertaining, those impressions were confirmed at every step. I cannot even now understand why they were called the Graces, excepting for the number ; though I can well understand why they were much sought after, and welcome in every house where they had once made their way. The rector was exceedingly proud of them, and equally fond of them : and as his wife had been dead some years, he regarded the acquisition of a suitable match for each of them as his peculiar duty. So it was in some sort, because there was none else to take it off his hands ; but I need hardly tell the experienced reader, that whenever a man sets about a woman's business he makes a mess of it. I do not see the utter impossibility of a prime minister in petticoats. Woman might drive a team, command an army, hold the silver

sculls, or ride for the Derby, perhaps with some incongruity ; but she would be at home compared to a match-making papa, if he had any real sense of the gentleman about him. Conceive his selection of the eligible *partis*, then his uncouth efforts to give a disinterested invitation, general or particular ; his curious inability to play his fish when hooked ; and his conscientiousness of having something to do unfitted to his nature and position : his uncertainty as to what to say, or when to say it ; when to sit in the room, when to leave it ; and his constant blunders and no less ridiculous endeavours to correct them, which render him the laughing-stock of his neighbours, the *bête-noire* of his daughters, and, possibly, the victim of a designing impostor. Women are not all equally acute at the game, fortunately for us ; they make mistakes sometimes, of course ; but they are never ungraceful performers at it, unless hampered with an inherent vulgarity, which we do not contemplate as belonging to decent society.

Now, I have not, or rather had not, the slightest idea how Dr. Delaprè managed matters ; but there was the patent fact that Tom Barnett, in the course of three weeks from my visit, was about to become the honoured guest of the rector. To be sure, I have since heard the delicate way in which he approached the subject : positively mentioning in his first letter the anxiety of the ladies to make their Cousin Tom's acquaintance, congratulating him on his accession to such a handsome fortune, and painting the charms of his daughters in such glowing colours, as to remind Tom of two things, which ought at least to have been kept in the back-

ground — his own newly-acquired importance in his uncle's eyes, and the necessity of caution in such a Circæan cavern, where women were concerned. It took him a week to answer the letter, and when he did so in the affirmative, it was done as a matter of civility, and that he might finish a visit of one week to them by one of two or three to me.

"He's not half so good-looking as Captain Archer," said Alice, as she sat before her bed-room fire, on the first night of his arrival; "though I don't see for what papa used to abuse him. He seems very good-natured."

"His hands and feet are enormous, dear," said Edith, "and he's just the sort of person to get fat as he gets older."

"That's the sedentary life he's been leading," said Constance. "I rather like fat people; not that I think Cousin Tom is so at all. What ought we to call him? We used to call him Tom when we were little, you know; but I suppose that wouldn't be right now. Has any one seen the new curate?"

Yes, papa had seen him; but no one else, and he had said nothing about him. As it was Saturday, however, it wouldn't be long before they all had that opportunity.

"He's to read for me this morning," said the doctor, "and you can hear him preach this afternoon." This was at breakfast. It was not a subject that interested Tom Barnett; and however they might have felt, the girls gave no vent to their sentiments. They dressed themselves as usual, plainly, but very handsomely;

bonnets just as large as they ought to be ; hair, not the latest, but most becoming style, worthy of Isidore ; and then they all went to church.

“Do you know your new curate’s an old friend of mine, Sir?” said Tom at lunch.

“No, I did not, Tom. How came you to know Mr. Grant?”

“He was my tutor after I left Eton. I don’t know why he has given up taking pupils, or what brought him here.”

“He’s a friend of our bishop ; so he’s as well in the diocese—out of sight out of mind.” Tom had not acquired sufficient polish in London or Calcutta to resist saying that he had always found it so.

“Do you know much of him?” after a pause.

“Not yet. He only arrived yesterday. He had the strongest recommendations of a private kind. He looks like a gentleman.”

“And he is one. One of the best fellows that ever lived. I owe——” Here Tom suddenly checked himself, for he could not have gone on without appearing to cast an intentional reflection on his own family.

“He is so much older than we expected. Did you see his little girl in church?” enquired one of the Misses Delaprè.

“His little girl?” said Tom. “No. I didn’t know he had one : that was Minnie Grant that sat in the large pew, that you call the Dangerfield pew. I haven’t seen her for six or seven years, but she’s not altered a bit, only grown. I should have known her anywhere.”

“What!” exclaimed all three, “that beautiful girl,

that we thought was a niece of old Lady Dangerfield? Oh impossible! That can't be Miss Grant. Why, I believe he's not very well off now; she doesn't look at all like a curate's daughter."

"I don't know what curates' daughters do look like, but that's Minnie Grant, and you'll find her one of the nicest girls in England." Saying which Tom Barnett strolled through the open window on to the lawn.

"How very odd, now," said Alice; "that's so like papa! If the bishop had sent a hippopotamus or a gorilla he would have thought it right to give it a trial, at least. But I'm glad Cousin Tom gives a good report, for I like the look of Mr. Grant amazingly. I don't think he looks too old at all. He'll do admirably for Edith, and as to the girl, she's positively charming. Connie, dear, we'll go and get her here to-morrow."

To do the three sisters justice, they set to work to make themselves as amiable as possible: and they succeeded, as far as Minnie Grant was concerned, very easily. They soon found out that Tom's report was not too high of either father or daughter: and although the former was not in affluent circumstances, neither he nor Minnie were persons to be ashamed of. The rector had no such paltry notions belonging to him, any more than his daughters. As to Tom himself, he announced his intention of accepting the worthy divine's extended invitation, which was not given quite with the purpose to which it was being turned: and the old gentleman, though he never relaxed in the duties of host, felt that he had been playing his adversary's game. The girls liked their cousin better every day, and very soon found

out that if the curate was not eligible, the curate's daughter was very likely to become so. They had a respect for Tom's constancy, when he told them about the little girl he used to swing in the garden, while the other fellows were gone to a cricket match, or out on the river. It was not so easy for Dr. Delaprè to see it in the same light.

I waited very patiently for about three weeks, hearing occasionally from Tom Barnett, for the purpose of postponing his visit to me each time. It gave me no inconvenience to wait : and I was amused at the talents of the old rector, and only curious to know to which of the three Tom had attached himself. I should certainly have recommended Connie myself. She was such a jovial, happy soul : so capable of appreciating a good fortune. Not that Alice or Edith were deficient in this respect—certainly not : but they always struck me as being a little more capable of self-preservation : and Connie really was the best looking of the three, a sufficient reason for the preference of a comparative stranger. His lengthened visit boded love-making : for he was the last person in the world to waste his sweetness in a country parsonage without some special object. However, I could only conjecture, for I was too far off (the other end of the county, in fact) to go and look.

At last he came. He was not in high spirits : rather the reverse, I thought. But sentiment will be served. So I said nothing, till one day he provoked the conversation by some remark. We were smoking after the rest of the family had gone to bed, a condition peculiarly favourable to confidential disclosures. I don't know how I got so

far, but at last I said : "Well, which is it, Tom? Out with it, old fellow."

He looked slyly at me, and then sheepishly at his cigar. "Which do you think?" said he to me, as if he were going to disclose immediately.

"Well, I don't know," said I, beginning to think. "Alice is the best fun. Said to be rather severe, *mauvaise langue*; but perhaps you don't care about that, if you don't suffer. Edith! now that's a nice girl, and very good-looking; rather of the dignified order; looks as if she was always carrying something on the top of her head. She'd keep a fool in order: you'll be thrown away upon the exercise of her good sense. Connie's the one for you; a regular woman and nothing else. She's neither clever, nor stupid, but a very good girl; and I wish you luck, Tom."

"You're altogether wrong," said Tom, laughing.

"Do you mean to say you've escaped? You must have broken the doctor's heart with disappointment. What do you suppose he expected every time you took a turn with him in the garden, or drank a bottle of the old gentleman's '47 when nobody else was by? As to your cousins——"

"Oh! they'll get over it very nicely."

"Come, then, who is it? there must be somebody. You're bound to marry somebody, if you haven't proposed to a cousin."

"Do you remember Minnie Grant?"

"What that little thing! of course I do."

"She's taller than either of my cousins, and much better looking."

"And when the d—I did you see her? For old Grant has left Cramfield long ago."

"Who do you think is old Delaprè's new curate?"

"I didn't know that he had one."

"Why Grant, our old coach. Good fellow that he was: there he is at Decuma Magna with his daughter. I always did like that little girl as you call her: and, 'pon my soul, I must marry her." Here he shied the end of one cigar into the fire, and lit another, which he smoked most volubly for a minute or two.

"Well, that's easy enough; they're not likely to refuse such a Nabob as you, Tom. Old Grant, you know, came rather to grief about his pupils after you went. Tried to make them work, and keep them straight; and then he lost some money in the Swallowfield Mining Company—limited liability, of course. Nobody could pay up but himself, which limited its operations very effectually. There can't be much difficulty there; not if Barkis is willing—I mean Minnie herself."

"I don't know about that." This was said, not gloomily, but rather sedately, as if there was an obstacle, but not utterly insurmountable.

"Then you'd better enquire. Have you done so?"

"No, I haven't. Plenty of time before I go back again to Calcutta."

"Well, you know best about that," said I.

"The fact is, I don't know what to make of old Grant. He used to be so tremendously civil to me. He was the best friend I ever had. I told you what he did for me. Why, I owe him every farthing I've got in the world. For my poor father was a very extraordinary person, and

if I hadn't gone out, I don't think we should ever have heard of him or his money any more. So the first person I went to call on on Monday, after seeing him at church, was Grant; you may fancy my astonishment at seeing him in the reading-desk on Sunday. He was delighted to see me; said all sorts of kind things, and so did Minnie: and I was thinking all the time how charming it would be if—if—well, you know what I mean—if we made it all square, that is, Minnie, you know." Here Tom became so incoherent that I thought it as well to give him a lift, so I interrupted him by assuring him that I quite understood his generous intentions. Then he took a good drink of soda and sherry, and proceeded:

"Well, this went on for about a fortnight; and I couldn't help fancying it was all right, though I hadn't said anything about my prospects or intentions exactly; but I thought he must know what I meant."

"I hope you spoke more intelligibly to him than you did to me just now."

"I'm sure Minnie knew," he began.

"That's the main point: we'll manage the governor."

"I don't know about that: for all of a sudden his manner quite changed; and though he was exceedingly civil, he was as formal as if he had never seen me before. Left off calling me Tom, and——"

"You know why, don't you?"

"Not I; how should I?"

"Somebody's told him what a swell you are, and he's afraid your uncle and the girls should think him as bad as themselves."

"Oh come, d—— it, old fellow, that isn't true! Old

Delaprè's been deuced kind ; and as to the girls, they're as kind to Minnie as if she was their own sister."

"Are they? Well, I'm glad of it. As she can't be that, make her a cousin. The long and the short of it is, they've been telling him what a lot of money you've got, and he's just the sort of fellow to fight shy of you. It will all come right, if you're sure of the woman—that's the first thing."

"But I'm not. She wasn't uncivil, but she was shy, and—and—not at all like what she was before."

"Ah! that's it—I know all about it. It's all right. Now you go to bed, and don't set the house on fire. My mother never breakfasts till ten, but you may have yours at what time you like."

The next morning I woke early, and getting on my hack, I took the train to Decuma Magna, which was on our line, and walked up to what was called the cottage, the usual residence of the curate of the parish, when he was rich enough to command the luxury of a furnished house to himself.

My old tutor was glad to see me, and Tom Barnett had not exaggerated the charms of his daughter: notwithstanding which I wonder the three barrels failed ; and to this day I have my doubts about old Delaprè's management.

We soon began talking about old times, and got easily enough to Tom Barnett. I was loud in his praise, and could see with half an eye that Minnie Grant was grateful. I did not manage to get much response out of her father ; and at a good opportunity she left the room.

"Do you know anything about Barnett's affairs?" pre-

sently said Mr. Grant—not carelessly, as affecting indifference, but somewhat pointedly. Ah! thought I, that's it. I was certain of it.

"Yes, I do;" and I related nearly what I knew, softening matters as much as I could, but not falling into the opposite error of pauperising my friend. "He worked very hard indeed for a time, as you perhaps know, and then his father's death added considerably to his funds. He's over here in search of some investment for his property."

"Do you know that positively?" said my interrogator.

"Yes, I do, positively; he told me so himself."

"Well, I heard it before, but I scarcely believed it. I thought better of him," added my late coach, *sotto voce*, with a sigh which did not escape me.

"I don't quite understand you, Mr. Grant. Tom is one of the most straightforward, honourable men in existence, and laboured day and night with a settled purpose ____"

"*Justum et tenacem propositi virum*," murmured he again. "I had the highest opinion of young Barnett, I assure you, and even now I wish him every happiness."

"I don't see why you should have changed your opinion of him only because his fortune has changed for the better."

"That's it: and I don't mind telling an old friend like you, that if Tom Barnett has come home in the flourishing condition I hear, he ought to have paid his just debts. If he had been poor still, I never should have thought of it."

"I should think he doesn't owe a ten-pound note in the world."

"I should have thought not six or seven years ago. For I hardly regarded a few hundreds of my own as a debt: if I could have afforded it I would rather have made it a present, I was so fond of the boy: and I would rather give it now, and know that he couldn't afford to pay, than have lost my good opinion of him."

"You—you don't mean to say he has never discharged his debts to you?" and the wonder expressed in my face seemed to stagger him.

"Indeed I do."

"Then all I can say is, that there's some egregious mistake, which can be easily set right, for Tom Barnett is at my house now."

"At your house!" and my old coach looked considerably upset.

"Yes, at my house, my dear Mr. Grant. Whither he came because he was unable to account for your change of manner towards him. It has grieved Tom very much, because he felt it to be utterly undeserved. There's some mistake, some loss, or robbery; but he'll soon put that to rights." And as I proceeded to unfold the story of Tom's labours, his eventual success by dint of hard work, and his letter of rejoicing when he felt he could take one day's pig-sticking or tiger-shooting with a clear conscience (not before he had paid his best friend and benefactor), I saw the tears standing in the eyes of my old tutor, who picked up a straw hat off the table, and went in search of Minnie.

"So," said I to myself, "it wasn't false pride after all.

He wants an honest man for a son-in-law, as well as a rich one."

That night, over our evening's symposium, I made Cousin Tom perfectly happy. Enquiry pointed to the dishonesty of a native clerk as the cause of the misadventure, and before very long Tom so arranged matters that he married his first love—a not very common occurrence—and remained fox-hunting in England instead of returning to pig-sticking in India.

Edith did not marry the curate ; and the three cousins were bridesmaids at Tom's wedding. Fortune has since put it out of their power to act in that capacity any more.





A TALE OF THE WAR.

THE autumn vacation had commenced. The House and the Park palings were up: and the police at the West End were already on leave of absence. The roughs of the east were coming westward for their vacation. Trade was beginning to stagnate, as one fetching his wind after violent exertion. An occasional dog's-meat man sang his "barcarolle," on the trotton at five P.M. And a very high, the highest personage of the realm—excepting, perhaps, Mr. Edmond Beales—had married off another daughter. A few hardly-used officials were still in Downing Street, drawing caricatures on their blotting-paper, because there were no invitations to answer, and a barricade had been already thrown up in close proximity to Oxford Street. These gentle hints suggested (if there be any stronger word used out of Parliament we shall be glad to avail ourselves of it) a removal. Where to? was the question. Our old route was said to be blocked. The Rhine, Wiesbaden, Frankfort, the Tyrol, Bavaria, and the Saxon Schweiz were in the hands of a victorious army—a temperate army, it is true, especially in the matter of tobacco, re-

quiring only eight cigars per diem each man, *première qualité*, and the best of lodging—but still a victorious army. Norway, Sweden, Schleswig Holstein (we were rather puzzled as to the coinage and government), Spain and Portugal, were still open to us for a short continental tour. We were thoroughly puzzled. Switzerland, to be sure, was safe enough; but that universal impecuniosity which appears to pervade all tribes of men this season, not exclusive of the Jewish tribes themselves, made us think twice before we encountered the bad charges and worse fare of our old acquaintances of Savoy. “Why don’t you go the seat of war itself?” enquired our friend Rascher.

“Because our German is a little shaky. That sort of thing did all very well at the Crimea, when we could talk French and be understood, and Italian and be laughed at; but German, ah! that’s quite another pair of shoes.”

“I don’t see what that has to do with it,” rejoined Rascher.

“Don’t you? well then, I’ll enlighten you. If you don’t answer a challenge intelligibly, it’s possible that the sentry might take a liberty with you.”

“Take a liberty? I don’t see what sort of liberty he could take with you for not knowing his mother tongue.”

“Then I’ll tell you. He might possibly shoot you, and most probably would do so.”

There were some such drawbacks as this to a Continental tour: and Ireland, as having its peculiarities of tongue and customs, was recommended. But by great good fortune, that is, by the moderation of Prussia on the one hand and the cheerful submission of Austria on the

other, peace was restored, and the Continent opened. Crowds of Englishmen availed themselves of the opportunity, the more gratifying, as it had been regarded as problematical for some time to come. Within the last month, therefore, curiosity has carried our countrymen over the fields of Sadowa, and Königgratz; and alpenstocks have been in high demand in the valleys of Chamouni and Sixt. The ball is once more rolling; and Prussians, Austrians (henceforth, I suppose, they come first), French, Russians, Poles, and English, are found in admired confusion at the German Baths.

Of course they are. Look now in front of the Kursaal, or Conversationshaus, at the tables without or within crowded with guests. See the waiters perplexed with the orders, in three languages at once, for a "Schopin of Hocheimer," "Eine Flasche Niersteiner," "Une bouteille de champagne bien frappée," "Brandy and water, I mean cognac," "Petite monnaie for a five-pound note," and anything else you please. Behold the portico, and the steps of the porticos, the Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics congregated beneath the one, ascending and descending the other. The newspapers, union of literature and peace, on the same table at either side; the *Times*, *Les Débats*, *Die Allgemeine Zeitung*, and Polish and Russian despatches of unapproachable orthography. Go inside: Austrian and Prussian elbow each other for the vacant seat. The Demi-Monde in the general reconciliation encounters as much stern virtue as belongs to a gambling woman: the fair and fragile Russian protects her heap of gold with jewelled fingers from the suspicious proximity of an English stable-boy. He is over there to

ride at the Continental meeting; and is conscious to himself of being in company rather below par. Whenever he arrives at the dignity of a full-blown jockey, he will have become less particular on that score.

We are all enjoying ourselves in our own way, thanks to the returning gentleness of the Prussian Lion. I am seated at a round table; the air is soft, the stars are shining, the tobacco good but exorbitantly dear, the waiter inattentive to the last degree. The chink of the ball is heard through the open window, and diamond butterflies sparkle beneath the lamps, on the piquant little hats of Rosalie, Aspasia, and Cerise. Not ten paces from me sit three men, engaged in a like occupation with myself; but they have been successful in attracting a waiter, and are enjoying their cognac and seltzer-water. Two are French and the third is a German; a fourth chair is being kept for an absent comrade. Carl is at play. The conversation is not loud, but intelligible.

"He is winning to-night again," says the Comte von Schwarzfeld, "or he would have been back."

"Of course he will be ruined at last," remarks one of the Frenchmen.

"He takes long about it," says the other, whose own reign was a short one.

"He plays for distraction only," explains the comte, "and he must have won several thousand florins since he has been here."

"It's a distraction I should like amazingly," replied Alphonse.

"And I, but one I never enjoyed," murmurs Theodore.

"I always lose."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Von Schwarzfeld; but whether in reference to Adolphe or some unknown person, it was impossible to say. At that moment there was a general move in the crowd. The steps of the Kursaal filled, and then discharged its crowd. "What's this?" said one. "The bank's broken," said another. "There's been a row," said a third. Just then Carl appeared.

"It's true the bank is broken—eighty thousand francs. It's that Frankfort man again. He plays recklessly, as if he wanted to lose: but fortune always is with him. I wish I'd backed him!"

"Does he play any system? A martingale?"

"None whatever. He seems weary of life and money."

"What's the use of one without the other?" enquired Alphonse.

"Strange that he should be so successful!" remarks the comte.

"I don't know, Schwarzfeld," replied Carl. "The highest and most successful gamblers are of two kinds: either men who have never seen a die or a card in their lives before, and who put down roulet upon roulet quite independently of all rule: or those few who, seeking distraction for violent sorrow, are content to play regardless of ruin. I think Edelberg is of the latter. Ah, Messieurs! there he goes."

As the Austrian spoke there emerged from the crowd a tall, handsome man of about eight and twenty years of age: he passed beneath the blazing light of the pedestal lamp, and exhibited features so worn and haggard that they appeared to concentrate the sorrows of many years.

His hair was long and uncared for. He wore a large-brimmed slouched hat, which partially shadowed his face, and added to its settled appearance of gloom. His neckcloth was loose at the throat, and his dress bespoke utter carelessness. He walked moodily past us, looking neither right nor left, and with a hurried uneven step. An officer in an Austrian uniform spoke to him ; and he returned his greeting, not coldly, but with an idle indifference, as though he were callous to such courtesy. In another minute was lost in the gloom of the allée which led to his hotel in the suburbs of the town the man who had broken the bank.

The Edelbergs were a great house in Frankfort. A great house in every respect. Honoured as money is honoured in such a community of self-made wealth, respected as integrity, intelligence, and high position deserved to be respected in all countries, they had given senators to the city for years. No name stood higher among the Burgher aristocracy than theirs, and of them none higher than the present representative of these virtues and wealth.

Five weeks before the time of which we write, there were assembled in the principal room of the house in which they lived, a dozen Prussian officers. They were of every grade, of every character. They were drinking champagne, and the table was covered with the luxuries of a rich and plentiful market. They smoked, as indeed is the fashion of their countrymen, regardless of the handsome furniture and pictures, and of the fact that it was the reception-room of the mansion. Their spirits were high and buoyant, their conversation loud and unrestrained,

and their jokes of an equivocal character, to say the least. Orderlies came and went, and their wants were supplied by the servants of their hosts, for such, having regard to the origin of the word, they might well be called.

"More wine," shouted the Baron Von Heidensturm, turning up an almost empty bottle, spilling its remnants on the floor, and kicking it towards the old servant who had been ordered to attend them. The old man felt the indignity, and hesitated.

"Quick, geschwind," shouted Rittmeister Kaiser, "and ask your master whether these cigars are the best to be had in this accursed place."

"They are the best the house affords, Sirs, and eight each have been served to the Gnädigen Herren to-day. Here ensued a Babel of voices, accordant in one thing only, the abuse of the master and the fare. The intendant ventured to remonstrate, and, as the dispute grew, in less moderate language than the self-imposed guests approved of.

"Silence, Schwieg Du;" and Herr Lieutenant Von Schreinfels rose and clanked his sabre to enforce obedience. It was not accorded by the old man, who felt the honour of the family to be at stake: and answered haughtily. In three more minutes words were turning to blows; in which the old man would have had but a sorry chance. Already a drunken young Freiherr of a cornet had drawn his sword; and, according to the etiquette of certain countries, the servant would have been a corpse in another moment. Indignantly he was refusing to obey the orders of the intruders, and to ravage his master's cellars or cigar-boxes for more.

The juncture was a critical one. Blood would have been shed : and the chivalry of attacking an old and innocent man, might have been reserved for future legislation, or remonstrance.

It was not to be : at that moment, attracted by the noise, and really anxious for the safety of the house or household, the door of the great dining-hall opened, and a momentary interruption ensued. It was neither the master of the house nor a subsidiary force of Knechts and retainers. A beautiful woman stood before them, and between a lawless soldiery and an indignant servitor. She was of more than middle height, of a magnificent carriage, though scarcely so round and full in proportion as the women of her province are usually found to be. Her face at this moment was lighted up with unnatural colour, and her blue eyes shone with unwonted light : at other times clear and delicate, and suggestive of more than ordinary fragility. Her golden hair in luxuriant masses was hardly confined by a coloured band or ribbon. Her dress was rich, but simple in ornament : not a jewel relieved the monotony of her mourning, which had been worn on her person, as in her heart, since the occupation of her country and her native city. Such was Amalia Edelberg, the only daughter of the late senator, and the sister of the present Burgher of Frankfort, as she stood between her defenceless servant and the insolent soldiery, who had quartered themselves upon her brother.

Her entrance upon the scene was so noiseless amid the confusion, so utterly unlooked for, that it produced even more than its due effect. The cornet's sword returned to its scabbard ; the Rittmeister stammered almost an

apology as Rittmeisters only can stammer, with smothered oaths, in times or countries where the military element eclipses the social. All fell back and cowered for a moment beneath the firm dignity and flashing eye of the loveliest and wealthiest heiress of Frankfort.

"My lady," said the old man, "this is no scene for you. I have done my utmost to protect your name from insult, and your property from plunder amongst these robbers;" again there was a low murmur, a muttered oath, from the soldiers, while the old man continued, "your person is not safe among them, and I am powerless to assist or defend you; where is the master?"

"Silence, Gottfried; my brother is from home. Leave the room. I will attend to the wants of these gentlemen. They will scarcely draw their swords upon a defenceless woman, Prussians though they are; and enemy though she be." But Gottfried stirred not; and the command had to be repeated before the long habit of affectionate submission took the place of his natural fears for his young mistress's safety.

"And now, Messieurs, what is your pleasure? The soldiers you have quartered upon harmless people are incapable of supplying your demands; my servants refuse to do it."

"Refuse, say you, young lady?" remarked the Baron von Heidensturm, on whom the good cheer had taken effect, laughing ironically. "Hanover and Saxony refused a great many things that we required, but to what purpose? Refuse, do they, to supply our just demands?" and he rose, with no steady gait, and walked towards Amalia Edelberg.

"Be seated, Von Heidensturm," said more than one of his companions, who saw but little *éclat* in a dispute with a young and beautiful woman. "Sit down," and they rose to arrest his progress ; while Amalia answered him.

"Yes, Sir, they refuse, women and men, to place either their honour or their lives voluntarily at your disposal," and a deeper blush suffused her features, which were beginning to resume their wonted pallor. "They have no confidence in your inclination or profession to command yourselves."

The baron again laughed insolently : "And who then shall serve us ?"

"That will I," said the girl, unflinchingly.

"Come then," rejoined he, as he resumed his seat, and relit his cigar, "let us have more of the old Steinberger Cabinet, and a better batch of cigars." And once more the smoking and conversation began ; the latter, however, improving in tone in the presence of the girl, though unrestrained in its abuse of her countrymen and her home. She herself left the room, and, though detained by the entreaties of her household, returned with fresh supplies to her boisterous guests, who continued their orgies under some degree of restraint.

In the meantime Amalia Edelberg suffered from a reaction, which was likely to take place after the excitement of the scene she had gone through. Tears filled her eyes, and all colour had left her cheeks, as she rose from her chair by the magnificently carved buffet to attend to the wants of the officers. She trembled with emotion, half anger, half fear, as they spoke of the "*Verfluchte Bür-*

gerscheft," the accursed kaufleute, and of their intended reprisals for insolent opposition to the demands of their idolised and rapacious minister; when they boasted of the successes of their army over the terror-stricken citizens, and of their triumphs over unprotected women, her heart beat with a passionate regret that she was so powerless, as these half-whispered braggings just reached her ear; and she rose to leave the room and its occupants to their own wills.

For the last minutes, too, insolent glances had been thrown at her, and comparisons, whose very flattery in her case added to the insult. Loudest in these was Von Heidensturm, who was as indifferent to the smothered reproof of his companions as to those of his own conscience. He had lived, in times of peace, a rude despot in uncontrolled power over his provincial retainers, and unrestrained by any bonds but those of law and mutual restitution among his neighbours. What was he likely to be in war?

"Wohin, Mädchen; whither so fast?" said he, rising to detain her. "By—— we are well satisfied with our Hebe. Worthy art thou to be the cup-bearer of the gods; and if thy cellar has produced no nectar, we have seen no lovelier representative of Olympian service. Ah!" said he, and he arrested her hand upon the lock of the door, as she was about to open it: "not so fast."

"Unhand me, Sir. What! is there no one here with courage to protect an innocent woman from the insults of this monster? Is this the sort of reprisal which German gentlemen permit themselves for opposition to their long-cherished dreams of ambition? German unity,

forsooth ! in the hands of such heroes ! ” but the occasion was too gross even for the apathetic indifference or active dislike which was universally borne towards the despised and unhappy burghers. His comrades rose.

“ For shame, Von Heidensturm ; let her go,” said the Rittmeister, approaching the door, and himself forgetful of his previous want of courtesy in the more active oppression of his senior officer.

“ Nonsense, Rittmeister. Who are these Edelbergs, that they withhold their best from their conquerors, and send us some wine and old men, instead of their choicest Rhein wine and loveliest maidens ? ” And the baron still leaned with his back to the door, while Amalia, heated and flushed with passion, stood with her hands clasped, and her throbbing eyes fixed upon the Rittmeister.

“ This is no maid-servant, but the lady of the house—the sister of Herr Edelberg himself. Let her go directly, Von Heidensturm ! ”

“ Let her go, indeed ! What business is it of yours, Rittmeister ? ” and here he again attempted to take her hand.

“ Yes, let her go. It is the business of every honourable man. I insist upon it ! By Heavens, he’ll be the ruin of us all ! ”

“ Insist, did you say, Herr Rittmeister ? ”—releasing the hand, however, and placing his upon his sword.

“ I did, Herr Oberste,” replied he ; “ this is madness, gentlemen, and must be prevented.” At the same moment the baron drew his sword. In an instant the rest were out, and while he struck fiercely round, a passage

was made for Amalia Edelberg. She reached the door amid the clash of weapons, and fell fainting into the arms of her brother, Rodolph Edelberg, who had just returned to his home.

Incoherent explanations of what had taken place were not wanting ; and indignant reproaches were hurled against the oppressors and their instigators. But what of that ? Was there any redress from the wolves to the lambs ? excepting, indeed, from the dog that should have guarded them ; and then the stream separated them. There was a gulf between the victor and the victim that the latter could not pass. So in a few days when Amalia could be moved, Rodolph Edelberg, with his sister, quitted his home in Frankfort, to return to it no more. What cared the army of occupation for that ? He left his wines, which they drank ; his cigars, which they smoked ; his furniture, which they destroyed ; his horses, which they rode. His servants had followed their master and mistress ; so these men of valour waited upon themselves, which, indeed, they were well accustomed to do. The blessings of war were so great, that they may be forgiven for despising the blessings of peace which were to come. They ate, they drank, they lay down to rest upon couches of down, and rose up to play, and at the end of six weeks returned to face the realities of military life upon half a thaler a day.

Sufficient was learnt from Amalia herself of the personal indignities to which she had been subjected. She was a girl of very peculiar character. Her mind had suffered from the humiliation of seeing all she held dear and sacred made the sport of fortune. She had been

taught to feel no contempt for honourable enterprise and intelligence, though unconnected with military prestige. She had regarded her brother, her father, her ancestors, as men worthy in their political and commercial character to be compared with the warriors and statesmen of any land. The Burgomaster of Frankfort was, in her eyes, as great as the minister of any country; and, since he had preferred to die to witnessing his city's humiliation, far greater. Her brother was her beau-ideal of a man, equally so of a gentleman — who required no clanking of the sabre, no ringing of the spurs, no glitter of the epaulettes, no swagger of the devil-may-care roysterer, to substantiate his claim to high breeding. There are many such in the great mercantile communities of the world. They may be wrong, which will not alter the fact; and so might she have been. These ties had been tested lately. Her national prejudices had been rudely dealt with. The feelings which did her honour had been snapped asunder. These things had made a deep impression on her. She shared with her brother and his friends their hatred of the name of their oppressors. When the threats that had been uttered against her fellow-citizens came to be put in execution, they far exceeded the worst anticipations. Fines were enormous — not levied in accordance with ordinary rules of war, nor in proportion even to the reputed wealth of their friends, but in accordance with the malice of unjust and oppressive exaction. Then came the personal humiliation to which families of distinction were subjected—the rudeness and occasional violence of their persecutors. By these measures the minds of the victims were kept in a

state of bitter excitement beyond endurance. But time would have obliterated these things. Not so with the scenes we have recorded. Amalia and her brother were made to feel in themselves, apart from their nationality, the power of the resentment they had unwittingly provoked. A public decree was to be visited with private and particular injustice; and when at length her imprudent, though spirited, interference to save the life of an old servant brought down upon her rude insults and personal assault, the indignity lacerated her very heart-strings. For days after the scene from which she had escaped she struggled between life and death. Neither came to relieve her; and when the fever and delirium left her, her mind was gone. As her brother looked on her pale face, and large tearful eyes, in which fear of some inexplicable danger struggled with partial inability to recover the thread of broken affections, he chafed under the recollection that circumstances rendered him incapable of punishing adequately the transgressors. To what tribunal were they amenable? Where should he apply for justice? Justice, indeed! The only justice that could satisfy him would be war to the knife; and then he was the loser.

A month later, his sister's sense of the insults she had received had settled into permanent despondency. The highest authorities had pronounced her case to be irremediable. Her nervous temperament had received a shock from which recovery was hopeless; and, after providing for her temporal safety and comfort as far as he could, Rodolph Edelberg went forth to avenge her wrongs and his own, in the best manner that he might.

His first object was a friend. He had hundreds. But friend to whom he could confide the tale of his sorrows, and the calamity that had befallen him, were not so numerous. Hundreds would have lent him money to prop the failing fortunes of his house, if such he had needed. But he wanted one who would respect his secret, sympathise with his loss, and seek out the author of it, wherever he was to be found. For his home was once more free, and its occupants were gone. At length he found one, who undertook the office and its responsibilities, who followed the baron, and found him encircled by his comrades, and gloating over new triumphs.

“A message from Herr Edelberg?” said he, laughing insolently; “brought by you, Sir, who are of the same burgher class as he. You hold no military rank; no position beyond that of simple krämer, handworker, tradesman — kaufleute, if you will. Impossible! I fight with the enemies of my country, or—with my equals. Stay, can your friend Herr Edelberg find no military man of approved rank to bring his message?”

“He shall try,” said the other; and that evening he was again in Frankfort.

To us in England a blow would have seemed the easiest solution of such a difficulty; but to a blow from a civilian an officer can but find one answer—immediate death by his sword, a weapon ready to hand. When Rodolph heard the termination of his friend's suit, his first resolve took no definite form. There still remained to him one chance; and, though loth to do so, he adopted it.

Amalia Edelberg had not been without suitors, and although her hand at the time of her illness was unclaimed, it was usually understood that her cousin, the Count von Steinbad, a Moravian nobleman, would have the first claim. Rodolph was aware of the affection which existed between them. This knowledge urged him in opposite directions. Who so fit as his own cousin to be the bearer of his challenge? How difficult, should the facts be made known to him, to prevent him from making the quarrel his own! Upon second thoughts, however, he decided upon employing him, telling him only so much of his quarrel as he should think fit: explaining the absolute necessity of fighting, and that no stone must be left unturned to bring Von Heidensturm to book.

An armistice favoured his designs to a certain extent. Von Steinbad took the opportunity of visiting Frankfort in the hope of seeing Amalia Edelberg, and passing a few days with her. His hope was frustrated by her state of health, but his interview with his Cousin Rodolph was conclusive of his determination; and he started on his mission with feelings of indignation at the slight that had been put upon his mother's relatives, almost as strong as those of Rodolph himself.

By availing himself of the most rapid means of transit, the count came within a mile of the Baron von Heidensturm's quarters the same day. From a small inn by the wayside he caused a note to be forwarded to the baron, requesting the name of any gentleman to whom he could refer as to the preliminaries of a meeting which admitted of no delay. The count was not kept long in suspense;

before the expiration of an hour the Rittmeister Kaiser presented himself.

Von Steinbad received him with studied politeness, but a coldness which left no room for doubt as to the object of his visit.

“I am a messenger from Herr Edelberg, of Frankfort.”

The Rittmeister blushed and hung his head, for he was no bad type of the cavalry officer—brave, open, kind-hearted, somewhat given to sensual enjoyment, and thoroughly ashamed of the part he had had to act in the occupation of Frankfort. At all events, he had done his best to shield his hostess from personal insult, at the expense of a quarrel with his colonel. They were still together, as the secret had been kept for fear of the consequences. It was desirable, if possible, to avoid an *esclandre*. So he answered: “So I was given to understand by Herr von Heidensturm.”

“I trust he has reconsidered his determination of not meeting him?”

“I can scarcely say so. As a nobleman yourself, you may see the difficulty——”

“No, Sir; I see none. But to rescue you from a false position, I will return myself with you to the baron’s quarters, and endeavour to show him the necessity of it. I had hoped that we had nothing to do but to arrange the preliminaries of what must take place.”

The Rittmeister rose, and the count, ringing a small handbell, which stood on the round deal table, ordered his horse to be saddled immediately.

Baron von Heidensturm sat in deep reflection, awaiting the return of his messenger, for his mind misgave him that

a Moravian officer might be less easily dealt with than a civilian of the city of Frankfort. He was determined to avoid a scandal if possible. Not that Von Heidensturm was afraid of fighting, but he knew well how far he had exceeded (not the licence given to the occupants of Frankfort, but) the conduct of an officer in command ; and he was not willing that a drunken brawl should come to the ears of the Feldzengmeister. His safest plan, therefore, seemed still to consist in sheltering himself under his patent of service or nobility. He had just made up his mind to do so, when the Count von Steinbad and Herr Rittmeister Kaiser were announced.

The count spoke first.

"Being unable to come to terms, Sir, with this gentleman, whom I regard as your friend, I have taken the liberty of waiting upon you myself. I must apologise for doing so, but your sense of justice will admit the excuse."

The baron motioned him to a seat, and throwing from him the cigar which he had been smoking at the moment of his arrival, looked at the count, and bowed slightly.

"Am I right in inferring from this gentleman's language that you design to decline meeting Herr Edelberg?"

"I have seen no reason to change my resolution in that respect. Much as we are accustomed to regard wealth——"

"Are you aware, Sir, that I am an officer of Hussars in the Austrian service?"

"I have no reason to doubt your position, count ; it was a question of a third person, whom you have honoured thus far——"

"The honour, Sir, I feel to be mine. I was given to understand that your conditions involved the presentation of the cartel by one of your own profession. I believe I fulfil part of them."

"Your personal inconvenience no man can regret more than I; but on reconsideration, and consultation with others, it has become necessary to keep strictly the line of demarcation——"

"Then Sir," said the count, with some difficulty restraining his passion, "perhaps the fact that he is a relation of mine might——"

"Might make some difference, count, you were about to say," replied the Baron von Heidensturm. "And indeed it might, but——"

What the baron might have added was cut short by an impetuous exclamation of Von Steinbad.

"Might! Herr von Heidensturm, it shall! The quarrel, Sir, is mine; and I presume the objection to *kaufleute*, as you are pleased to call the honourable families on whom you have trampled, does not extend to the Counts von Steinbad, or the officers of the —— regiment of Hussars," with which words the count placed his card on the baron's table, and, turning on his heel, left the room.

It was a fine bright morning in July. The heavy dews were still upon the grass, and the cobwebs spread themselves from one wild flower to another. The amphitheatre of high dark trees, which stood on the rising ground behind the city of Frankfort, threw their shadow from east to west, as the sun appeared to come up slowly behind them. Within the glades of the forest the early morning

was breaking through the darkness, which had never been thick during the night, and the birds were welcoming the return of day. By one of the by-paths, there appeared on foot three figures, one of whom only wore a capacious cloak, short though ample. The warmth of the morning seemed to need no such precaution. On the edge of the forest trees they stopped and spoke earnestly. In the dark eyes and pale features of the one we might have recognised the strange figure that flitted past us beneath the glare of the lamps at the Spa. There stood the tall, commanding figure of the Frankforter, looking wistfully forth, and peering into the opposite side of the forest. Near him was the Count von Steinbad, who addressed him, though slowly and solemnly, with an appearance far less gloomy than his own. On the face of the one was a settled melancholy, a hopeless despondency, a haggard, woe-begone look, as of something already lost to him. On the handsome features of the count was no such expression. He, too, was pale and stern : but it was the sternness of a danger to be encountered, and of one that was wont to meet dangers without despising them. The third was an officer in the count's regiment, a friend of both, and the principal second in the business ; he produced a case from beneath his cloak, and looked critically at the ground. "Von Steinbad, why was this? Was nothing to be done to save my honour but this? why was I not allowed to defend it myself?"

"Nonsense, Rodolph. It was my honour as much as yours. You might have fought a dozen times ; it never could have satisfied me." At that moment the count's friend came forward, and whispered : "They are coming,

count. *A la barrière. N'est ce pas ?* "Yes," said the count: and at the same moment a "fiacre" appeared from the opposite side of the open space in which they were standing.

From this carriage descended, not three persons, but four: the two seconds, with their principal, the Baron von Heidensturm; the fourth was the regimental surgeon. A whispered consultation took place between the four, and then a gentlemanly-looking man of military carriage, who proved not to be the Rittmeister, advanced and saluted the count's friend.

Some little time was consumed in the choice of ground, and the preparation of the weapons, of which each principal took two. Whilst this was taking place, Edelberg, buried in his own unhappy thoughts, stood leaning against a tree. It was not enough that his sister was dead to him, but now, instead of himself, he had risked his friend and cousin. And what if anything happened to him? poor Amalia! at all events she could know nothing. And if he came off scathless, what was the reward? Amalia again—but what an Amalia to the one Von Steinbad had loved.

"Every sense
Had been o'erstrung by pangs intense,
And each frail fibre of her brain
(As bowstrings when released by rain
The erring arrow launch aside)
Sent forth her thoughts all wild and wide."

So they went on (save one of them, who stood absorbed in his grief), self-possessed, both principals and seconds, to measure the ground. "Thirty paces? to advance

within five of each other?" said a young officer of artillery, who was acting for Von Heidensturm.

"Up to the line, I think, was agreed upon," replied the count's friend: "but five, I presume, will do," and he went back and spoke to his principal. "I regret to say," said he, returning, "that my man insists upon the barrier as agreed upon originally," and they began to pace the ground. "Then fifteen paces on each side of this line is the distance, and fire when they like." The instructions were given to the principals, and the seconds were about to retire, looking as sadly on their work as the men themselves, when the count turned shortly back and walked up to his Cousin Edelberg. "I know all," said he, in a low voice. "If I die, give her that," and with that he drew from his finger a seal ring, with his coronet and initials. "She'll value it for my sake." Then he turned away and returned to his place at thirty paces distant from the baron.

"He doesn't know all," muttered Edelberg. "It's too late now; but if harm befall Fritz——!" and an expression of pain passed over the young man's face, which bespoke his interest in the trial he was to go through.

They stood face to face. The hard stern features of the Northerner set to a deed for which he felt his own rash and insolent pride was answerable. His more refined, but not less resolute adversary, of Southern Germany, not less pale, not less stern, but with a chivalrous expression on his face, the offspring of hope in a struggle for the maintenance of family honour and right. So Fritz von Steinbad had been taught to think, and thought. What was his own existence, or that of a fellow-

creature, to the maintenance of respect to those incapable of feeling it—who had passed from earth generations and generations before? Was not the obligation so great, that there, on this very field, a few paces apart, one or both should dissolve into thin air—should go hence, they knew not where, and be again as though they had never been? They were both brave, both young; one was not all bad, one was not all good; both might have done the world some service, for thereto were they sent into it: but both were mistaken. Till that moment, neither had fully realised the fact that certainly one only would leave the ground alive. As the idea came full upon them, they paused and stood for a minute, eyeing each other: and if any weakness of purpose had been visible in either for a second, it was as quickly gone; and self-preservation came to aid them in their purpose of hostility.

In a moment Von Steinbad appeared to have made up his mind. His left hand hung by his side, holding one pistol, while he raised his right suddenly with the other, covering his adversary, and advanced rapidly towards the barrier. Having reached the line, he stopped, again took aim at Von Heidensturm, and fired. The baron, in the meantime, had stood immovable, with his arms, each hand holding a pistol, crossed on his breast, nearly fronting his enemy. Before the report could be heard, his left arm dropped and the pistol it held fell to the ground; at the same time he seemed to stagger, but to recover himself immediately. His seconds moved toward him, and one of them presented him with the fallen pistol, which he took without, however, raising his arm. Having remained at his post, he was now fifteen feet from Count

von Steinbad. The count's face flushed, and, from being before pale, it had now become almost red; but it was the dark flush of angry disappointment which coloured it. He waited for his adversary's fire, who advanced to within ten paces of him, and fired. The light cavalry wing which he wore was torn from his shoulder, otherwise unscathed. A pause again ensued. Ten paces separated the combatants, and they had each one pistol remaining. The count could advance no further; nor was it probable that Von Heidensturm would do so. Again, therefore, the count fired; and this palpably with effect, for the baron staggered some paces forward and fell, his weapon still undischarged in his hand. His seconds immediately ran towards him, offering him assistance, and under the apprehension that there remained nothing to be done, excepting 'by the surgeon. He rose on one elbow and waved them off: and, though his face wore the hues of death, so fearful, so ruthless was its expression, that they stood aloof, while Edelberg and his friends walked towards the count, imagining that their man might be removed from the ground and that it only remained to them to assist the wounded. Not so.

"Messieurs, it's my turn, I believe" ("Jetzt fange *Ich* an"); and he dragged himself yet a pace or two nearer to his foe. "It's my turn now:" and, raising himself almost to a sitting posture, he looked the Austrian bitterly in the face. The count was pale as death, for he saw the cold-blooded malice which lit up with a gleam of light the dying eye of the fiend before him. Astonishment paralysed the seconds of either party; and when one

word of remonstrance fell from his own, his only reply was: "You have not two bullets in your body."

Von Steinbad's honour, which brought him to the stake, would not permit him to flinch when at it—in the presence, too, of an enemy and his friends, so lately victorious over his country. He stood, and the fire flashed from the pistol—he leapt into the air, and fell dead at the feet of the Prussian. At the same instant, a cold shudder passed over the frame of the wounded man, and, turning deliberately round, he dropped on his face, and died.

"Save yourselves, gentlemen," said the doctor; "my art is useless here; we must be beyond the Grenze, the boundary, before this is discovered, or we shall fare badly;" and he summoned the driver of the fiacre. "A duel in time of war is unpardonable."

"Would to God we had thought of that before!" said the young artilleryman.

But Rodolph was by the side of his friend, vainly calling upon him, and as vainly stanching, with his handkerchief, the trickling stream which flowed from his friend's left breast. Where was his revenge now? Where was the object of it? All his bitterness was against himself. All that he had felt—all that he would have done—remained only for his own head. "If harm befall Fritz!"—and harm had, indeed, befallen him. Against whom were his threats to be directed? Against whom but himself? He was incapable of reasoning upon it; but it came home to him sorely—the whole of the mischief he had done, and the misery he had caused—in one moment of time. The widowed mother he had bereaved of a son

—the sister——No, he was saved the completion of his wretchedness by the knowledge of her misfortune. She, at least, could suffer no more.

As he leant down to press his lips to those of the murdered man he fell insensible upon him, and was removed from the terrible scene only by the united strength of his companions.

Days elapsed, and peace was confirmed, but the terrible tragedy was the theme of many a tongue. The history was known, and conjecture was not much needed to fill up the gaps of the Rittmeister's explanation. It mended no hearts, but it exonerated, in some measure, the chief surviving actors; and the search became less active, and the pursuit of justice less sure. Military honour is not yet satisfied with fighting the battles of a country; it must have some of its own.

Days elapsed, and Rodolph Edelberg could bear no longer the agony of suspense; he must visit Frankfort once more. He must go and look at the wreck of his house, and see in the body the ruin of his hopes; and the city was once more free. It was night when he reached the house in which he had left Amalia, and he was not, therefore, surprised to find it in almost total darkness. An old servant replied to his summons, and ushered him into the large sitting-room on the right of the *port cochère*.

“My sister, Martha?” said he impatiently, and looking out from his hollow eyes at the woman, who was proceeding to light the room.

At the question, however, she stopped. “Then the *gnädige Herr* has not heard.”

"Heard what?" and he rose from a chair into which he had thrown himself in his fatigue. "Heard what?"

"The Fraulein is—," and here the woman hesitated, and the tears began to fall; but Rodolph had borne much, and, whatever it might be that awaited him, he determined to know the worst. So he said:

"Is dead, you would say, Martha? God be with her! It is better it should be so. Sit down, Martha, and let us hear all about it. The rest of you are in bed, I suppose? Now tell me all."

But Martha was more frightened by his calmness than she would have been by his most angry mood, and feared to tell him all at once the truth. Martha's creed was a common one with her class—that death was the worst of misfortunes, and swallowed up all that was good to live for—hope; so her young mistress's death had to be dragged out of her through tears, lamentation, and woe.

"And she was buried yesterday; and my aunt, who was with her, left only this morning?" and Rodolph's voice scarcely faltered.

"Yes, that is so."

"And she continued unconscious to the last?"

"Unconscious?" repeated Martha, who was not quite sure what limit was attached to the word.

"I mean, she was unconscious of everybody and everything about her, as she has been since her fever."

"No, Sir; she knew me and her aunt, and asked for you. She wasn't quite right like, but she was better—more of herself—and began to read a bit at odd times."

Rodolph's face lost its impassiveness, and his eyes

filled with tears, as he repeated, "Read a bit. Then poor Mälchen was better?"

"Yes, she was reading or trying to read, when she was taken in her last fit. She never spoke again. I was in the room at work, looking at her as she sat in her chair, and wondering whether her hair would come again as it was before, when she just threw up her arms, and gave a shriek that might ha' woke the dead. When I got to her her eyes were fixed, and she died that night. She never spoke again."

"And what was she reading, Martha?"

"Well, I don't rightly know. It was a newspaper of some sort, I think; but the room has been left just as it was against your return, and it lies there now, most likely."

Rodolph took the light from the table and walked up stairs. Yes, there it was; a newspaper a fortnight old, containing the fatal news, which had been so carefully concealed from her while she was incapable of comprehending it. Fatal error! it might have added to his own self-condemnation to have had to tell her; and how would he have done it? "What is, is best, after all," and then he left the house.

Within a week the property of the Edelbergs was publicly announced for sale. Frankfort was no longer their home. Rodolph himself had disappeared, leaving his worldly matters to be wound up by a friend, and taking with him large sums of money in specie and notes. From that day, urged by some strange infatuation or anxiety for distraction, he had done nothing but play. He sought no company; would bear with


none; but in every place where play was most easily accessible there was he to be heard of. He sought ruin where many a man seeks wealth, and found wealth where others find but ruin. Those who knew nothing of his history envied his fortune: and as he crossed the gardens, haggard and worn after his fruitless exertions to forget himself, Adolphe exclaims, "Lucky fellow!" and Alphonse wishes that "I were he." Paris, Homburg, Wiesbaden, Baden, know and fear him, for he bears a charmed life, and breaks banks almost as fast as they can be supplied. In a few weeks he is sick of his successes, which are more monotonous than losses, which might give him a new excitement. He prays for madness, and his prayer is heard; but it is not the madness which scares memory from her seat; it is rather the mania which pricks and spurs the willing horse, and goads the imagination with phantom shapes of uncommitted wickedness. There is no escape for him from himself. The ruin that he courts flies from him, and he is too miserable for even success to affect.

We watched him fade away slowly on his dark and lonely way, laden with spoil. It was the last time we saw him. He destroyed himself that night.





COME TO GRIEF IN THE SHIRES.

66 ELL, Tom, where do you spring from?" said Roger Dutton, who was no less astonished to find Tom Plaskett in London, than he was to be there himself, at the end of October. The streets were a mixture of smuts and sludge, and nothing open but the National Drama and the National Gallery.

"I'm just back from the Houghton meeting," replied Tom Plaskett, biting off the end of a cigar under the doorway at Limmer's, and striking a light.

"Anything doing at Newmarket?" enquired his friend.

"Yes, the ring is doing remarkably well, and the *flats* have been done. That's nothing new, you'll say—admitted : however, the quiet lords of the Jockey Club have been rather scandalised by the young Duke of Squandergelt wanting to lay a hundred thousand in one bet. It seems he's taken a couple of months to lose ninety thousand, and wants it all back at one coup."

"I don't see what it is to the Jockey Club if a man chooses to ruin himself," says Roger, who was exceedingly indifferent to opinion, public or private, on his own affairs.

"Ah, Roger ! that's because your own nose is short, and you never look beyond it. If Squandergelt sends so much capital floating about in the ring at one time it will ruin the Jockey Club too. If you play at chess with a better man than yourself, exchange pieces as often as you can."

Here Tom paused to regard the effect of his wisdom.

"I don't see it," says the other, in the interval.

"Because the fewer weapons you leave him to fight with the less mischief he can do. If Levi, and Sampson, and the calculating cobbler get hold of a hundred thousand from one man at a fair hedging price, the winter campaign will be a heavy one, and the gentlemen can't stand it. There are some of them will have to winter upon the layers of odds as it is."

"And what's become of Swallowfield?"

"Done," said Tom Plaskett, with an involuntary melancholy in his voice—"done to a turn ; so he's taken the Stubbington country, and means to give them six days a week. He's got the best pack of hounds in England, and they tell me that his stud is not to be beat."

"Oh, oh !" remarked Roger Dutton, not exactly seeing this mode of retrenchment in its right light ; "and how did he come to grief?"

"Well, he lighted the candle at both ends and in the middle, so——"

"I see now," said Roger, suddenly enlightened himself ; "and so all the fat went into the fire."

"Precisely. And what have you been doing since Beales sacrificed himself for the good of the common-wealth?"

"I've been to Scotland. Everything very flat," said Roger—here he suddenly recollected himself—"excepting the hills. The weather, as a rule, was awful; and as to the rivers—well! it's the same every year. I never went to a river without Sandy—(yes, Sandy; that's the name of all the gillies, with some few exceptions)—without Sandy wishing I'd only been there yesterday, or could only stop till next week. Same with the grouse: they're always wilder this year than Sandy ever knew them; and 'Ech, Sirs, Maister Commeron [Cameron] and his party shot four hundred and sixty brace last year in four days on this vara hillie, but you'll no' get near them the day;' and we never do. Vates and Augur and Argus, and those vaticinating friends of yours, are all humbugs; old Sandy's the prophet for me; for as sure as he tells us we shall not get a bag, so surely do we walk up and down those infernal hills to no purpose."

"But I thought the accounts were good this year in most parts of Scotland."

"Accounts! Of course they are. Why not? They're like Peter Pindar's razors; they're meant to read. The prince kills a bird now and then, I believe, and a stag or two. They know him as well as He that made him. Instinct is a great matter, and they don't fly away from the true prince. You fellows stop at home, I suppose, and enjoy the reports which are confined to the papers in my case, and are made up weekly for the provincial press. You see, Tom, all trades have their tricks: and it's desirable to get tenants for your moors at any sacrifice."

"But where else have you been since the campaign in the Highlands?"

"The spas of Germany, the battlefields of Sadowa and Königgratz, and the white cliffs of Brighton."

"What of the spas?" enquired Tom Plaskett.

"The officers, Prussian and Austrian, were still on service. Cakes and ale were less plentiful than usual: but people played and women dressed as if crowns were of little consequence; and as to racing, the continent has gone mad upon it. There is an English jockey or two to be seen nightly, with rouleaus of louis and foreign paper, between a Russian princess and a Polish countess, the glitter of whose pearls gives one an unpleasant sensation of St. Vitus's dance."

"And their heads not affected by it in the morning?" asked Tom.

"No more than their hearts at night. They're not even appalled by the decorations which surround them. They seem a little astonished by the clamorous greetings which reward successful exertions on the turf; for Frenchmen have not yet learned to subdue their enthusiastic demonstrations over a few hardly-won napoleons. Comte Choufleur is an immense favourite at Paris, and, after winning the steeplechase at Spa, nearly lost his saddle and bridle on the way to scale, in the desperate attempts of men and women to kiss him. Nobody knows or cares whether some pounds of extra weight were pressed upon him or not."

"That's a demonstration which would have called for the active interference of the police in this country," remarked Tom Plaskett, through a cloud of tobacco-smoke.

"All the flower-girls, of whom there are many, licensed and unlicensed, attacked him at once with bouquets; and

he reached the saddling-room to weigh out something like an exhausted chimney-sweep on May-day. He'd been down three times, you see, and the course was knee-deep in mud."

Here Roger Dutton looked up at the sky, which presented a hopeless array of leaden clouds.

"Anything to be seen at Sadowa or Königgratz?"

"Nothing whatever; floods of rain have washed out the remains of the cartridges as effectually as the needle-gun has washed out Hanover. As to Brighton, it's so full of Jews, that I felt, every time I went out, as if I was going to be sued on a bill; so I left. By the way, I saw your mother and sisters there, and the Jerninghams—the only respectable people in the place. The best equipage was Hogginson's, the pork-butcher, who made an immensity of money by the cattle plague. Cleaver's daughter, too, is going to be married to Lord Tinfoil. What a chance one missed in the shambles last season, to be sure! He pays off all the mortgages, and Tinfoil is to have fifteen thousand a year settled on him, exclusive of five thousand a year for his stud. He's bought back Spindle, and engaged Roper as his private jockey at five hundred a year. And now, where are you going?"

Roger Dutton, having delivered himself of what he called all the news, prepared himself to become a listener. He was disappointed.

"I'm going," said Tom Plaskett, with considerable deliberation, "to play a rubber at the Portland, and then I'm going down to my old quarters at Six Hills to begin the season on Monday." Saying which Tom threw away

the end of his cigar and hoisted his umbrella, and his friend did the same.

There were no two better fellows in their way than Tom Plaskett and Roger Dutton. Stay one moment. Without pretending to make a finished portrait of either, we may as well give the reader a sketch of the two, as they sauntered through the rain up the right-hand side of Bond Street; for not a cab was to be seen. The drivers were all attending a great Reform meeting at Totnes to consider the Ballot question; such, at least, as were not out of town with their families for the long vacation.

Plaskett was a swell in his way. We don't mean to say that he approached the sublimity of a Brummell, the originality of a Petersham, or the exclusiveness of a Cavendish; but the little boys in the street stared at him, and some youngsters from school regarded him as their *beau ideal*. He was the sort of man about town who was sufficiently on the confines of fashionable society for Oxford and Cambridge men to ask who he was. The knowing young gentlemen who came out of the City at four to ride hacks at six P.M.; the young bank-clerks, distillers, brewers, civil service men, and subalterns on leave, nudged one another, and said, "That's Tom Plaskett; deuced neat fellow, isn't he? capital fellow across a country, I can tell you;" though it would puzzle a conjuror to tell how they knew. He was very good-looking, well got up (not offensively so), always rode or drove one good horse in the season, and took care to be seen with good men, or not at all. At least he eschewed the bad. He was always to be met at the right places, and never pretended to do what he could not do

thoroughly well. This is a great secret of success, but requires a self-control somewhat difficult of attainment. He played a good rubber, but only attempted billiards as an amusement in private houses ; was a good judge of *cuisine* and French wines ; knew something of a horse, French novels, cricket, light literature, private theatricals, and tobacco ; and was suspected of having written a smart article or two without much depth in the *Piccadilly Journal*.

His friend Roger Dutton, was a totally different person from Tom Plaskett. Roger was not all the fashion ; and was passed in the streets, day after day, by youth ambitious of knowing "who's who" by sight, at all events, without so much as a suspicion. He was a man of excellent family, related to half the peerage, and acknowledged by them all. It happened to be an advantage ; he cared no more for them than he did for the author of *Pre-Adamite Unbelief*, or *Geology Made Easy*, or any other equally recondite subject of enquiry. He was a thorough gentleman, though he hated gloves, and wore the thickest of boots, and strongest of broadcloth at all times. He was a sort of beefsteak and port-wine man, and only put up with the very best of claret, when the port was, as usual, undrinkable. He might have gone to all the "at homes" and "suburban dîneurs" of the season, into which Tom Plaskett was barely admitted ; but it didn't suit him to do so. He was as hard as nails over a country ; always had good shooting and fishing in Norway, Sweden, and Iceland, or some out-of-the-way corner ; and put up with Scotland, and a castle full of company purely upon the principle that one ought to keep

an eye on the younger branches of the family. He made a point of running down once a season to Eton and Harrow, where he tipped and fed everyone who had the remotest claim upon him, and was bowled to, all the afternoon, at about half-a-crown a wicket, amounting (four balls going at once, you know) to something like three sovereigns more to the general fund. Beyond this he had no family ties, and was as free from any incumbrance, save that of a good income, as most men.

Roger Dutton and Tom Plaskett had not much in common therefore ; but they were excellent friends, and just at this time, without any mutual acknowledgment, circumstances made them a little more intimate than usual.

If Roger was without family ties, Tom Plaskett was not. He had a mother and two sisters ; excellent women, extremely good-looking, well-dressed women ; accomplished and cheerful, and calculated to make any gentleman happy, who could afford the luxury at several hundreds a year. Mrs. Plaskett had been a beauty : was still given to strong colours, had a dignified walk, and got into a carriage irreproachably. She loved Tom, affected politics of the old Whig school, and worshipped the aristocracy. This was the rock on which she struck. Her whole life was embittered, may I say rather leavened, by the fact that that august body would not allow the women Plasketts to get more than a head and shoulders into the mysterious shrines of the goddess of Fashion. The girls, on the contrary, were very good girls : enjoyed themselves in their own way : were satisfied with the modicum of Ladies Mary and Isabella they did know : were the life

and soul of half a dozen country houses, to which they invariably went at the end of the season, till they took Brighton by storm ; and eventually electrified the shires by their horsemanship, where they had a very comfortable home—the residence of the late Sir Benjamin Plaskett, judge of the Supreme Court of Hullabaloo, and member of the council of the Kill-'em-and-eat-'em Islands, a discovery of Cook. Here were all the enjoyments of life in a nutshell ; and the old lady (that is to say, comparatively so, for such women never grow old) might have been ten times as happy as two-thirds of the marchionesses whom she coveted, if she could but have thought so.

Other people, indeed, saw what she did not : and one of these was Roger Dutton. Roger, men said, was not a marrying man. I don't know myself that he was born like gentlemen of some religious persuasions, with a peculiar gift that way ; but Roger Dutton, at thirty-four, had not eschewed all intentions of matrimony : and had seen nothing so suitable for the purpose as Tom Plaskett's elder sister. My own impression is that he was nearly right, and knew that earls' daughters were expensive luxuries ; and had all been disposed of by the fashionable novelists. He fancied, too, that the Priory, at which the Plasketts lived, was a far more comfortable home than its mistress would allow ; and during the last hunting season, had made trial of it whenever the hounds had met on that side of the country. So Roger Dutton and Tom Plaskett were more intimate just now than the dissimilarity of their dispositions would have led one to expect.

“Plaskett,” said Roger, as they descended the steps of their club, “who is that distinguished foreigner, who is to

be seen not unfrequently at your house, and who is just now at Brighton?"

"At Brighton, is he?" replied Plaskett, and he frowned, as decidedly as he thought becoming upon the occasion; but without answering the question.

"Yes; he's at Brighton, in great force; but who is he?"

"Upon my word, that's one of the questions I was going to ask you."

"But what's his name?"

"He calls himself the Count de la Fontaine: Heaven knows where he came from: I don't, and don't care." This was not quite true. Tom Plaskett would very much have liked to have found out.

"I've seen him before, somewhere. Dark hair and eyes, and very white hands."

"No; red hair and dark eyes, which is quite the correct thing. And very remarkable hands; puts me in mind of Robert Houdin. But I dare say you have seen him: perhaps abroad: you go everywhere." This was a little flattery, which Tom thought it desirable to administer now and then, on principle.

"Well, I didn't meet with him in the best of company, wherever it was. I hate those confounded foreigners, they always look lost without a pack of cards, and a croupier's rake."

"Ah, you're prejudiced;" and it must be confessed that he was; but he went on notwithstanding:

"Confound them: they come over here, and they win our money, and bow and scrape, and scratch their horses when they please, and go back again and laugh at us: and we're such a pack of fools, that we feel quite flat-

tered by it. There's that d——d count, whatever you call him, drove me out of Brighton with his cursed gloves"—here Roger buried his own hands in his pockets—"and patent leather boots," and here he beat a tattoo with his own high-lows on the steps of the Portland.

Tom Plaskett knew the state of affairs now, as well as if he had been at Brighton instead of Newmarket. He had his weakness for a count, an irreproachable dresser, and *beau garçon*; though he took care not to be seen too much with him.

Since the days of the Normans, a foreigner of distinction in England has always played, more or less, a conspicuous part. He may end by attempting to murder his own son, or by disappearing with the heiress or the family plate-chest, when least expected to do so; he may prove to be a late arrival from the galleys, or a petty tradesman from the Palais Royale; but he is usually somewhat of an artiste, a musician, a sculptor, a dancer, writes epigrams (his own or other people's), a medium, a believer in Rousseau, fetches and carries, sighs when he has no other means of expressing his devotion, and shrugs his shoulders at all times.

"Grammaticus, rhetor, geometres, pictor, aliptes
Augur, Schœnobates, medicus, magus; omnia noscit;"

and this "Græculus esuriens" is the most tractable or teachable of poodles.

Now, good Mrs. Plaskett had this weakness in common with others, but in no ordinary degree. She was not only fond of a count *per se*, but was a very clever woman, and had no great dread of atheistical discussions in a foreign

language. She liked homage, too, from a well-looking sprightly gentleman, with Vandyke beard and ruffles—most women of her age do. She had, too, a motherly pride in watching the envious whisperings of others, when her daughters appeared so well attended; to say nothing of the absolute convenience of a well-dressed slavey to call her coach, do her errands, talk light literature or high art to her guests, and get her chairs and ices at the Zoo, when such things were at a premium. The French she thought capital practice for the girls, and “the count” sounded well, when she had a provincial audience, and national nobility was at a discount.

M. de la Fontaine was a perpetual spring. He could stand colour well: scarlet under-waistcoats, mauve ties, and a light-green coat. His conversation was as light as his dressing—all *omelette soufflée*, but deliciously flavoured. The worst of it was that nobody knew where he came from; no one, excepting his friend, the Baron Noblet—but then, no one knew where he came from either. If the old lady had been taxed directly to state where she picked him up, she couldn’t have told. Somehow or other he managed to get into the house, and when Tom came back from the Paris meeting, he was too firmly established to be dislodged. I don’t think Tom Plaskett particularly wished to dislodge him, so long as he didn’t bore him with his company inopportunistically; for he talked well enough about French cookery, and Alexandre Dumas, the Empress, the Jockey Club, and the exiled family, for whom he was at present an interesting *émigré*—it may be added, a voluntary one, which is so much more valuable. He made, too, so fine an apology for Tom

Plaskett's Sunday racing, of which he was a little ashamed, that it created quite a diversion in his favour. Of all things in the world, his horses were admirable; and he stuck out the toes of his highly polished boots, and did the "Bois" to perfection.

"Fanny, dear, where did we first meet the count?"

"I'm sure I forget, mamma. Oh! it was the night Strapper was so tipsy, and upset us coming away from the Haymarket. He sat upon the horse's head, while Emily fainted. He insisted upon sitting on the box of the brougham to see us safe home, between Strapper and William, and then he called next day."

"Very attentive, I'm sure," said Mrs. Plaskett.

"Yes, mamma, dear, especially to Emily!"

"Nonsense, Fanny! You really do say such things." A slight pause, during which the young lady took up "Temple Bar." "He must be a man of very good property."

"It's to be hoped that he is, for his tailor's sake."

"How very few Englishmen one sees with so much manner!"

"Or assurance," added the younger lady from her book, *sotto voce*. "So much mind, too—well read, and an excellent judge of music. I wonder whether he plays any instrument?"

"His own trumpet!" again said Miss Fanny, unheeded.

"His sketches, too, are admirable. What a pity it is that Englishmen are so far behind foreigners in all these accomplishments."

"Why, they'd be quite irresistible, mamma, but for their incapacity for dancing, and their love of truth."

Mrs. Plaskett looked up, not quite understanding her elder daughter's badinage.

"Love of truth, my dear, what *are* you talking about?"

"Yes, mamma; you see we have imitated them to a certain extent. We shave our heads, and not our chins; and wear broad ribbons and bindings round our hats, and pockets down to our knees; and if it were not for that little leaven, a love of reality, which makes us such bears, we should very nearly be identical with them."

"I don't know what you mean," says Mrs. Plaskett, who began to think she was being laughed at; "but if you mean by love of reality the odd things that Roger Dutton says——." It was now Miss Fanny's turn to look red; so she did, a very little indeed, and went on with her book. This conversation took place at the end of the season, when the count had not made much progress, but had laid down his first parallel; and it was certain that Roger Dutton had not made love to Mrs. Plaskett.

It is but justice to Emily to say that she was much younger than her sister, and not by any means as strong-minded, should the reader have any suspicion that the Comte de la Fontaine had made an impression already upon that too susceptible heart. Such a thing was not to be wondered at, for he was certainly a far better lover than Roger, or twenty Englishmen who had been dancing with and around them throughout the season; the former of whom could not even digest his disgust at the interesting foreigner's presence, but bolted from Brighton,

notwithstanding its attractions. However, a few visits round the country were quite enough to disabuse her mind of the delicate poison to the working of which hot rooms and exotics are peculiarly favourable. She had got over the little attack remarkably well, without, as in measles, any fear of ulterior consequences, if the d——d idiot (whatever Roger Dutton meant by the expression) had not made his appearance on the West Cliff, when everybody else was gambling, or salmon fishing, or partridge shooting. There was young Towser evidently would have proposed in the winter, for he gave up a morning's cub hunting on purpose to get Emily Plaskett a particular shade of worsted, when she was staying at old Admiral Towser's place in Buckinghamshire. There was Hildebrand Potts, of the Life Guards, got up at five o'clock P.M. to stalk a golden plover, that she might have the wing for her riding-hat. Lady Mary Potts, his mother, was very anxious for the match: she was Lord Affidavit's daughter. He was only a law lord to be sure; but there's an aristocracy of talent in this country, so that Viscount Dickens would not be out of place in the Upper House. There was an Oxford man for whom Emily Plaskett began to have a fancy, and no one knows what might have come of it. No wonder, too, for he was the fourth son of a baronet, and had adapted the Ajax of Sophocles for private theatricals, in which the young lady consented to take the part of Tecmessa. She did not know what a questionable position the young woman held in the hero's household, nor did her mother; indeed, I'm not sure that the author did himself. And all these bright visions were now knocked on the head be-

cause this d—— f—— (which really means distinguished foreigner, though Roger Dutton would insist upon saying naughty words) chose to renew his attentions at the sea-side.

And must I reveal a weakness in the young lady? She had a fancy for being called "countess;" at least that thrown into the scale with undeniable feet, hands, beard, figure, and toilette, she began to be in love. So was the count—with himself and the comfortable independence which he had ascertained to belong to the ladies of the Plaskett family. A portion of the old East Indian's savings, when there were Begums to be plundered, and salt to be collected, at the moderate charge of about one thousand per cent. to the miserable consumer, on the not very genuine article, it being one half sand.

M. de la Fontaine had a weakness, indeed he had many; but one in particular. During the season, independently of his mightily frogged coat, and highly-spiced waistcoat, and elaborately-bound hat, he was conspicuous for his horse flesh. They were delicate lady-like looking animals, with coats like satin, and graceful legs, not very unlike the count's own. Their tails were diligently squared, more diligently than their master's accounts; and in the Row, and on the Cliffs, they capered nimbly, to the terror of the perambulating nursemaids, and the admiration of the girls' schools of that popular place of education. The count imagined above all things, too, that he could ride: and the fact of not having tumbled off for some time confirmed him in that mistaken idea. It was very pretty to look at, as he saw

in the shop-windows as he rode by, and he thought it would be equally good to go.

Now there's no place like Brighton for strengthening this view he had taken of his performances. Equestrianism, early in the season, is at so low an ebb, that the count gained by comparison. What with the boys and girls who clustered round the riding-masters, and the inexperienced citizens who would go practising by themselves, our friend, or rather Mr. Plaskett's friend, was a simple Meynell or Osbaldiston. To give the devil his due (which I trust for all our sakes he never may have), the count had plenty of pluck, which was increasing daily by confidence and experience combined. To see him flying down one hill and up another, in a crowd of stout women, and amphibious-looking shop-boys, with his coat-tails streaming behind him, and his well-fitting blucher boots and woollen cords, stuck out well in front, in pursuit of the timid hare, or rather I should say of the timid hounds, which were bent upon getting out of his way, was a treat to the lovers of Astley's and horsemanship : and when after spluttering through an extensive patch of turnips, he ended by surmounting what he called the *barrière* beyond, but which was really a broken sheep hurdle, he felt that nothing short of Leicestershire would henceforth become him.

The Misses Plaskett rode at Brighton, as they did everywhere else, remarkably well ; and the count was their frequent attendant. Miss Fanny was not impressed more favourably than heretofore ; but as there were half a dozen men there who declared the count was a capital fellow, and as the Plungers who were quartered there, and very

intimate at the Plasketts', stamped him with a certain coinage of fashion, she submitted with the grace of a sensible woman. The few old ladies who had daughters thought Miss Emily rather forward, or wondered at the imprudence of mamma, who plainly knew nothing of the foreigner, but what he chose to tell her, though they would not have hesitated about accepting him for Jemima, Amelia, or Anna Maria, if he had not preferred Miss Emily Plaskett to them all.

"When do we go home, mamma?" enquired her eldest daughter.

"Our time is up at the end of next week, but we can have the house for another month, if we wish it," said Mrs. Plaskett.

"I should think next month would be much pleasanter here," said Miss Emily; "there always are better people here in November."

"I thought you expected company at home next month," said Fanny Plaskett, not unmindful that sport brought Englishmen into the shires.

"So I do, my dear—it's only yesterday that the count——"

"The count?" said the elder daughter, "surely he won't be of much use in Northamptonshire. I should have thought he would have been more in his element here."

"I don't see why, dear," said the younger, with a very blank smile but a little tartly.

"Sea water and plenty of it never hurts foreigners, dear." This was rather hard, and to judge from externals scarcely fair. "But you've never asked him, mamma,

with Tom and the men that are sure to come down as soon as the season begins in the open."

"Indeed, my dear, I have ; he's been exceedingly civil to us, and——"

"Made himself very comfortable here whenever it suited him."

"Besides, I don't see how I could well help it, when he told us that he meant to come down. I didn't exactly fix a time, but I said I hoped he would pay us a visit when he came."

"Tom will be bored to death in the hunting season," said Fanny.

"You mean Roger Dutton," said her sister.

"I shouldn't be surprised, though I don't see that he has much to do with it. However, let's hope for the best : that he won't come. He has no horses yet, and perhaps he's no money ; and both these are against it. He won't come, mamma. So you're well out of it."

Neither mamma nor Emily thought this : though they held their peace.

Fanny Plaskett was a clever girl, with a matured judgment in worldly matters ; but this time she was wrong. The count was not long without horses, for he procured an introduction to Mr. Tollitt, who treated him remarkably well ; and he ought to have had money, for he extracted from the Plungers aforesaid before leaving Brighton a very pretty little sum. He never played, excepting "*whiste*" sometimes, but he was persuaded to take an occasional hand at *écarté*, and "*lansquenét*." If it's true that cards fall to the unskilful and inexperienced

the count must have been quite the baby he represented himself to be.

"By Jove, count, that's the king again—three times this game," said a smiling cornet, showing his handsome teeth, but without any intention of biting.

"Yes, if I didn't have him sometimes, I should lose my money, for I am a wretched player," said he.

"Bravo, count! You're a deuce of a fellow to hold cards. I like playing with you," remarked the gray-whiskered major; "that's four by honours, and the trick is another treble."

"Yes, I always hold cards, thirteen — when I can get them: but not when it's a misdeal," at which the Englishman good-naturedly laughed.

"Tollitt!" said young Smith, a man we all know by name, "have you half a dozen horses you can let my friend Count de la Fontaine have, to go down to the shires for a month? Something safe and quiet, that won't pull him all to pieces, you know."

"No doubt we can find something," said Mr. Tollitt, wondering what the count would look like after forty minutes on Billey Button, or the Banker. "George, what have we got that would suit Mr. Smith's friend; under twelve stone, I should think, Sir?" added he, eyeing the small limbs and narrow shoulders of the Frenchman.

"There's the Cannibal, Sir, and — let me see, Pickaxe — and Bloody Warrior." The count seemed much struck by the names, but as Smith declared himself satisfied, so did he.

"Yes, Sir, certainly, they can go down to Harborough by train, next week—we'll send two of our men down,

and he can get a helper or two down there, I've no doubt."

So that business was settled, and with his hacks and his servants, and Cannibal, Pickaxe, and Bloody Warrior, and three more of a good sort, the Count de la Fontaine reached Harborough ready for the opening day with the Pytchley. He was within easy reach of the Priory, and all the stiffest country in England. Thus far he had certainly alighted on his legs.

On the first of November, 186—, the Pytchley met in the village of Crick. This place is remarkable for nothing but its situation in the middle of a grass country, and the neighbourhood of a gorse cover of great repute as a sure find. The morning was not of that poetical sort which Dr. Watts or somebody else has celebrated as a southerly wind and a cloudy sky. It was bright and glorious as our autumnal days in this country frequently are. The hedges were still inconceivably full of leaf, an ample apology for the preference of stiff timber. There was a little east in the wind, and the young gentlemen late of the universities, and the senior members of the Leamington division, prognosticated no scent, as usual. As the theory of scent has been long exploded by the experienced, nobody paid much attention to these predictions. It was a great day for new leathers and tops, and the pinks shone resplendently amid the smoke of cigars and the sober black of the ecclesiastical division. The Count de la Fontaine had no misgivings as to his own appearance, and mounted on the Bloody Warrior, with Cannibal in reserve, with his toes out and his blue satin cravat which covered his breast like the plumage of

a pouter pigeon, he attracted a fair amount of attention from others.

"Tom, there's that infernal count again," exclaimed Roger Dutton, at once catching sight of the most obnoxious object, just as one is apt to see the ugliest place in a fence first. "Where in the world did the little beast spring from?" Roger was confident and comfortable in a roomy well-stained scarlet of the previous year, and in thick buckskins and mahogany tops, bound on desperate service, as they had been many a time before: very unlike the count.

"He's stopping at Harborough," replied Tom Plaskett, "some fool has persuaded him that it's something like the Brighton Downs."

"He'll find out his mistake if we've a run," replied Roger. "And he won't be so fond of the downs he's likely to meet with here;" at which period the d——f—— saluted his friend Tom cordially, and enquired after the ladies, in terms which showed him to be quite the "*ami de la maison*," or to consider himself so. It's a great thing to be a conspicuous object in a Pytchley field; not so great as at Waterloo or at Sadowa, but next thing to it.

Salutations must come to an end, even on the first day of the season; and having waited long enough for a few heavy subscribers, to find out that they were not coming, the hounds moved on towards the gorse. It is but natural that a dealer's horse should be a little playful at the beginning of the season, and the Warrior with the sanguinolent predicate (that's the correct term now) was no better behaved than others. He put his head down

in a rather resolute manner, took hold of the bit with the side of his mouth, pawed first with one leg, then with the other, and finally with both. He declined to have any smoking or nose-blowing on his back; vesuvians and cambric pocket-handkerchiefs being alike distasteful to him; two creature comforts or vanities lost for the day. A recompense was cheaply purchased in the admiration of the count's acquaintance, who declared him to be a first-class hunter, when the hounds got away. "Only, you mustn't try to hold him, count; especially at his fences; he fights like the devil." Whether the count understood this as a panegyric or not nobody knows, for he never told us. Possibly he didn't hear it, for his whole attention was directed to keeping on his back. Roger Dutton and Tom Plaskett had both an eye upon him; though the more serious business of a find had engrossed the general attention elsewhere.

At that moment there was a challenge, then a view from the second whip, who was stationed at the corner of the gorse, while Charles threaded his way among his hounds. "Yoi—over there; push him up," said he, as his horse bucked over the bushes, and was soon on the line. Then another opened, then another, till the old hounds acknowledged it with a chorus unmistakable, and the new entries joined in. Then there was another view: and the enthusiastic little Frenchman almost forgot his danger in the novelty of the situation. "Gorn-a-way," shouted Lord Spencer, at the top of the cover, having given the fox plenty of time to get clear of the crowd, and any probability of heading back; and in less than a minute or two the hounds were throwing their tongues here and there in

the large grass field pointing for Lilburne. Mr. Villiers is well on down the lane, looking for a lead, which he well knows how to keep when he has it. Sir Rainald Knightley (that's an anachronism as far back as 186—) is exhorting unsuccessfully the eager throng to "give them time;" but, finding it useless, goes straight for a thick bullfinch, which closes behind him, effectually flooring his followers to a man, who prefer the bridle gate a little higher up. Whyte Melville has negotiated the stile and footbridge in the corner, followed by a "gentleman in black." Mr. Bevan is looking for the stiffest piece of timber he can find to try a new four-year-old, and Lord Hopetoun is swinging along on Brown Stout, as if every pleasure in life was rolled into one. The crowd are bespattering one another in a lane of such mud as Northamptonshire alone can show, and a not inconsiderable number are just finishing off John Bright and the Budget, or slowly awaking to the fact that the hounds are "gone away." The late Jack Woodcock is making up for time lost in indecision as to how hard a head-whip may ride, consistently with his duty to himself and his employers, by going as straight and fast as a fine horseman on a thoroughbred one can go. In a few minutes there was a check. The crowd in the Old Street road had headed the fox, who was turning towards Hillmorton and the Rugby country. Tom Plaskett and Roger Dutton were in their places to the fore, and the rest of the good men and true pulled up, and looked at the leading hounds.

"Who's that on ahead, Charles?"

"Foreignerin' gent, my lord, I should think; or one

o' them Leamington chaps. Couldn't stop his horse. He'll stop of his self before he gets to Stanford Hall. Hey, lass, good bitch—she has it ;” and away go the hounds straight for Catthorpe village, as the crow flies. In the meantime the count, for it was he, began to get more accustomed to flying about, first on the shoulders, and then on to the croup : and finding he did not tumble off absolutely, and that the Bloody Warrior, whatever other good qualities he might have had, had a mouth you could hold on by, having at length pulled him round, set to riding on his own account.

“Well done, count,” said Roger Dutton, half aloud and half to himself, “how the little beggar does fly about ! I suppose he finds it easier—not so sedentary ;” as he shot up in the air, and came down again somewhere on the saddle, over a good-sized fence, with a cleared out ditch on the landing side. “He’s a good plucked one, Tom, anyhow.”

“He’ll come to grief in a minute,” replied Tom, who didn’t seem to care so much about the “foreignering” gent being in front of them all, and himself in particular. He fancied the effect at home might be more favourable than he desired. But the hounds continued to run, leaving the cover on the right ; so there wasn’t much time for conversation or thought, until a lengthened check in the neighbourhood of Stanford brought them up upon speaking terms again. The count was in a state of excitement bordering on raving madness, and accepted the congratulations of his friends and the abuse of his enemies with equal pleasure and unequal language.

"Confound it, Sir, you were right in front of the hounds!" said one of the latter.

"Right in front!" replied he, standing up in his stirrups, and exhibiting a very dilapidated neckcloth and much injured hat; "right in front, to be sure, and you left behind," unconsciously purloining one of my friend Mr. Whyte Melville's *bon-mots*; "where you shall be always." And on they all went again.

The scent and the fox both proved good, or else they improved one another; and having passed by Stanford Hall, the Warrior's condition began to tell against him. He was no longer so anxious to have the lead, though the count was nothing daunted; and as he dragged his hind legs through the binders, it was clear that much of his early elasticity had made riding him much easier, but much more perilous. The hounds had crossed the canal, and were running on for Hemplow, when the line of gates would have been more prudent if more ignominious. But the count had fallen among thieves: Tom and Roger were nursing him, one on each side, like a couple of City omnibuses with a newly-painted buggy between them. Roger was quite beginning to admire him.

"By Jove, count, you've gone like a Briton to-day!" said he, forgetting that it was an equivocal compliment.

"Put on the steam, count," said Tom. "The next is a rasper; I know it."

"Ha, ha! a raspère! I shall get into him first. Come 'long: I shall show you *de vay*." With which he warmed up the Warrior for a final effort, and shot out a length or two ahead of his companions.

The Warrior did his best. Had he had the place in

his first ten minutes, he would have done it, and the foreigner would have tumbled off upon his head ; as it was they rolled well into it together, only the Warrior was the uppermost of the two, and in another second Tom Plaskett was on the top of him. I do not know whether Tom Plaskett was sorry or not. His horse was beat, and had swerved at the gap that the Frenchman had made ; but when Roger Dutton saw the couple spread out on the ground, and the Warrior lying beside them, he wasn't the man to turn his back upon friend or foe. Tom was up again directly, and full of apologies, which were much needed, but did nothing towards bringing his friend to life.

The count was in a pitiable condition : half-a-dozen sherry flasks were out in a minute, and at his service. His hat was doubled up into a crush hat of the most dissipated order, and was lying at some distance off ; his coat's glossy brightness was utterly gone, and his blue satin neckcloth, and under-waistcoat of divers colours, were torn rudely open to give him air. "Prop him up," said one ; "let him lie down," said another ; "give him some brandy," said a third ; "give him more air," said a fourth ; "here comes the doctor," said a fifth ; for by this time the crowd was increased by the skirterers ; and accordingly up came a gentleman in a black frock-coat and white cord trousers, on a useful gallows, who tried to look as if he had only just arrived by the merest accident in the world. By the colour of his clothes, he must have had a desperate hard ride of it somewhere.

"Will he die, doctor?" said Roger Dutton, who had been contemplating the scene, and wondering how long

the hounds would be in Hemplow Hills, and whether they would kill there."

"Die? oh no. He'll not die, I hope—rather a severe shaking, that's all. We must get a hurdle or a gate and get him quietly back to Stanford and keep him quiet for a week or two. He'll be out again before three weeks are over. No bones broken. Where's the gentleman's hat? Hullo! what's this? Why it's a wig." And sure enough, through the dirt and mud the count's own hair stood out, a short hard crop of remarkably black bristles. His fashionably coloured auburn wig and hat were carried mournfully by his side, by a gentleman in corduroy breeches and gaiters, in hope of reward, while his own servant followed the cortège, now a very imposing one, with Cannibal and the Bloody Warrior.

"Tom," said Roger Dutton, as they turned to go home after killing a second fox, "that was a very lucky tumble to-day."

"Very lucky thing it didn't kill him, I suppose you mean," said Tom, "for we should certainly have been morally guilty of man-slaughter."

"There wouldn't have been much harm done, and we should have saved the French Government the expense of keeping him at the galleys. We sha'n't be troubled with that blackguard long, if I'm correct in my suspicion. I thought I'd seen him somewhere before, and now I know where. It was that confounded wig that put me all wrong."

"And where was it that you did see him?" enquired his friend, who felt a little uncomfortable, wondering how far matters had progressed, and hoping Miss Emily had

not compromised herself beyond the rest of the count's acquaintance, his mother and himself being of the number.

"Well, I'll tell you. I seldom go to races, and I never forget people that I have once seen ; those are two useful traits in my character ; but I did go to a foreign meeting last year, and I was so fortunate as to catch sight of a French 'filou,' who had dexterously united in one the two characters of welcher and pickpocket."

"That's not remarkable—at least, not in this country," said Tom.

"Perhaps not—it is at Trouville, and the punishment inflicted is likely to keep it so. However, the man in question succeeded in plundering in both ways foreigners and natives ; and made his way to England in an open fishing-boat with his booty. It was supposed that he had got away from England to America, or one of the colonies : but we've seen that gentleman to-day, or I'm very much mistaken. He was said to be one of the most daring and successful swindlers in France."

Tom's hair stood on end when he thought of the promising scheme that had been defeated by a day's hunting. "And how can you ascertain the truth of this, Roger ?"

"Simply enough. A letter to the commissary of police at Trouville, and the thing is done. Whenever the gentleman is able to leave his room it will be for Scotland Yard, and the extradition treaty will do the rest."

The Priory was in a state of commotion at the news of the count's accident (some said his death), which had reached that pleasant little country seat before Tom

Plaskett himself. He eased their minds as to the death, and then took his mother on one side and explained to her that it might be judicious to say as little as possible about their acquaintance with the Frenchman for a few weeks. Mrs. Plaskett had quite sense enough to acquiesce, and Fanny good-nature enough not to triumph.

If the absence of Tom Plaskett from the bedside of the distinguished *émigré* was calculated to awake any suspicion in his mind, he was unable to act upon it. The weight of the Bloody Warrior had incapacitated him for a fortnight, and the village Esculapius had no idea of allowing him to escape before his time by any too rapid exhibition of restoratives. Water gruel, batter pudding, very weak beef tea, and in a few days, perhaps, a little boiled chicken, and half a glass of sherry in winter, invigorates neither the intellect nor the members for running away, be the danger never so great. But long impunity had given boldness to the count; and as those who were not in the secret called frequently to enquire, it never occurred to him that he was likely to be run into himself.

In the meantime the usual negotiations took place. The police allowed no time to elapse. The government had no particular jealousy to feed by shielding a foreign felon from deserved punishment; so that about the tenth morning after the accident, while M. de la Fontaine was calculating the hours before he should be able to appear again in the saddle, and how soon he might indulge in a morning call at the Priory, he was unpleasantly reminded of his native land, of which he had taken so unceremonious a leave. His flowered dressing gown, neat

silk stockings, and Turkish slippers, produced no effect upon the emissary of Sir Richard Mayne : who requested his company in a private carriage as far as the railway station on business of the greatest importance. The count was much too weak to resist, and too much a man of the world to give needless trouble, and he left his lodgings with the blessings of his landlady, and a hope that the journey might not be too much for him. His last request was that his valet, who did not accompany him to town, would put a little less apricot jam into the tops, and a little more port wine in the bottoms of his boots, before he returned to Harborough.

"Well!" said Roger Dutton, one fine summer's morning of the following year, as he met Inspector Turnlock outside of Scotland Yard; "I suppose our friend the count is doing penance at Toulon. The French government ought to have stood something handsome for that job."

"It's rather a curious fact, Sir," said Inspector Turnlock, in reply, "that the French government were just then on the track of the Count de la Fontaine, *alias* Theodore Loup, when our information reached them. He had been imprudent enough to write to a comrade who was under *surveillance*, and the letter was stopped."

"And was there anything particular in it?"

"Nothing very remarkable; it was posted in Berlin, and stated that he was about to be married to a young lady with twenty thousand pounds fortune. It seems they didn't calculate upon finding an heiress of that sort out of England, so their first enquiries were directed here. We have ascertained who it was."

“Really,” said Roger Dutton, wishing his friend good-morning. “It would have been pleasant,” added he to himself, “to have had a *forçat* for a brother in law.” By which *sotto voce* it may be understood that Roger Dutton and Fanny Plaskett had made a match of it.





HOW THE BALANCE CAME OUT.

A TALE OF THE STOCK EXCHANGE.

BUSINESS is business: unless it happen to be pleasure; and then philosophy gives it the higher title of virtue. For when business has arrived at the dignity of a habit, it is associated only with pleasure or pain; and the test of a good business is the former of these. So much for Aristotle.

My own view of a good business is one which brings in an annual income, sufficient for all the necessities of daily life, and for most of its comforts, with a tolerably wide margin left for sickness, accidents, old age, matrimony, or any other of the possible evils of mortality. That's the sort of business to stick to; and probably it will return the compliment by sticking to you. At all events, give it a good chance. Don't go flirting about, philandering after strange gods, keeping one eye and two-thirds of the other on your "affaires," and the remaining sixth of the pair on the race-course, or the Row, the cricket-field, high-stepping hacks, something new in shirts

or old in china. My wish for you is that of the young elector at Eatonswill for the mayor: "May he never desert the tin and sarcepan business as he got his living by." I go beyond the heartiness of that enthusiastic young democrat. Don't desert any part of it; don't give it a chance of slipping out of your hands for a day or two, for sometimes such things forget to come back again. Look at old Bill Broker; his whole delight is in never having taken a holiday but once since he first began business, and that was on a very important occasion, his wedding-day. When the poor lady died, he forgot to pay her the same compliment; and instead of wasting valuable time in useless sorrow, he buckled on his armour, appeared at his usual desk at the usual time, and sighed, "Business first, and—pleasure afterwards." I think Mr. William Broker stretched the rule to its utmost limits, but he's worth half a million; and he will not be able to take any of it with him. He might save me a great deal of trouble if he only knew it.

It was an uncomfortable-looking morning towards the end of the year, and there was an ominous silence on the Stock Exchange, and then an indignant roar. Young Temple had just bonneted his friend Slater, and the latter was proceeding to reprisals by offering a pet bouquet of that gentleman's for public competition. Business was stagnating considerably, so as to admit of a more than usual supply of walnut-shells for amusement when the silence first made itself felt. A report had reached the dealers that morning that a great house must go, unless something could be done to save it; and though something had been done, and some bodies, too, who were not in

the secret, had been done, Messrs. Druggitt, Mizzell, and Cheatham, had knocked themselves down, and were gone. This was enough to exasperate those who had been hanging on to their skirts in a shaky condition since morning, and whose only hope remained in their resuscitation. Hence the indignant roar ; then a mighty rush to know the worst ; and then a crowd round some common centre.

“ Couldn’t anything be done, Dillon ? Is it a very bad case ? ”

“ My dear fellow, what’s the use of trying to help men who never help themselves ? Besides, they haven’t common honesty. If they hadn’t done the things they have, they might have had any money,” said Frank Dillon to the gaping multitude in general, and to the eager and interested enquirer in particular.

“ Money, by Jove ! That’s all very well ; but where was it to come from ? ”

“ Anywhere, everywhere. The whole country’s full of money for men who work for it and deserve it. I’d have lent them thirty thousand pounds if it would have helped them, and there had been a prospect of getting it back ; but Mizzell’s gone off with the keys, Druggitt is gambling at Spa, and Cheatham is in bed with the toothache at Brighton. They’ve left one unhappy clerk to answer all the creditors, and never telegraphed to him, until an hour ago, what the real state of the case was.” Saying which, the speaker put his hands in his pockets, and walked off, leaving his hearers, some of them beggars, but all of them pretty much of his opinion.

The usual result followed the ‘breaking up of a thieves’

association for the advancement of British commerce, which had been insolvent for years because Druggitt loved gambling, Mizzell what he called society, and Cheatham Newmarket. A few went to the wall ; there was a forced sale or two of Louis Quatorze furniture ; Mr. Rice and Mr. Sheward got some high-stepping phaeton-horses on easy terms, and a few mysterious broughams returned to Peters and Holland. Old country-people wondered how many were starving, or gone to the workhouse in consequence. It was not so bad as that, and the butchers and bakers can afford a pretty good run upon them after their great successes.

Having neither sympathy nor censure to expend upon them, we may as well go on with our story. Who was Frank Dillon, that he should talk of thousands, and of other men's honesty and courage in the words of authority ? Why did men of twice his age listen to him, follow him in their bargains, ask his advice, put him prominently forward, and trust him implicitly ? It was not for his good looks, certainly, for he was no beauty by the side of half the scamps in London ; nor for his experience, if that quality belongs to gray hairs, for he was still a young man ; nor for his persuasive eloquence, which was rather of the rough and ready school than of the bland and conciliatory ; nor was it for what they could get out of him, for though generous enough in private life, he buttoned up his pockets on the east side of Temple Bar, and drove hard bargains, as it seemed to many in the house. "Business is business," was all he said about it ; and everybody that thought so respected him for it.

Frank Dillon's career had been a great success ; and so remarkable, that it will be worth while to retrace our steps, and devote a page or two to what ought to be an instructive lesson. He was the third son of a gentleman of moderate means, but good family, in the west of England, whose great anxiety seems to have been that his sons and daughters should do as little as he had done to help themselves. It was an established rule, that admitted of no dispute, that the sons were to be "gentlemen." That word is expansive enough with some men ; with old Mr. Dillon it scarcely travelled out of the peerage, and its great qualifications seem to have been as much pretension and as little real value for money as can well be conceived.

A public school was necessary, and a long discussion between Oxford and a crack cavalry regiment ended in the choice of the latter for the heir, possibly as being less useful for a country gentleman, and more expensive. The second son took the university and the bar. At the former he rode steeplechases exceedingly well, which is unusual among undergraduates (or was in my day) ; was plucked for his smalls the first time, which is an accident common to attorney-generals and such persons ; and succeeded in leaving Oxford, having done everything for which he was sent there ; "*homo factus ad unguem*," as was admitted on all sides. He was called to the bar and took expensive chambers, as a son of the house of Dillon might be expected to do ; he also ate his dinners, and played at pool, but without making both ends meet, and his father had the pleasure of supporting him ; but he had also the satisfaction of having made a gentleman of

him ; and that reflection has softened a rather hard lot, strange as it may appear.

Now Frank was one of those extraordinary fellows that would not be made a gentleman of ; and as soon as he could act and think for himself, he determined upon relieving his father of "the ugly duck" of the family, and his sisters of a pecuniary drawback. Chance favoured his design. A visit to London pointed out anew the value of independence ; and as the City or Citywards, is the Eldorado of Englishmen, thither he made his way. A few minutes' conversation with an old schoolfellow decided Frank upon his movements, and he returned to the west of England only to announce his intention of supporting himself, and of beginning at once upon the Stock Exchange.

"Nonsense, Frank, don't talk about such a thing. You can go to Dr. Crammer's for a year or two, to get up your French and English, and arithmetic, and then you'll do very well. My friend, Lord Swordblade, has great influence at the Horse Guards."

"And how am I to live, when I have profited by the interference of Lord Swordblade, Sir? Of course you would have to allow me something."

"Certainly, Frank ; I've had to do the same for your brothers ;" here the old Cornish gentleman sighed without flinching. "And of course——"

"That will come out of the girls' pockets. No, no, my dear father, I'm for the Stock Exchange." If a small shell had fallen upon the breakfast-table, it could not have produced a more unmistakable effect. His eldest brother dropped his fork, and his sister the tea-pot.

"The Stock Exchange!" said his father, slowly weighing each word. "My dear Frank, you have always had some curious notions, but you don't intend to disgrace your family."

"No, I intend to support it."

"And what will your brother Sidney say to it?" This was the barrister.

"I shall not have much time to enquire, if he works as hard as I intend to." This was rather severe, and Frank felt it to be so, so he turned the conversation. "Will you lend me a couple of hundred pounds, Sir?"

"I'll give you five to do anything else with; but remember, your brother has been brought up as a gentleman, and is one."

"Then I prefer to be something else. I don't want to say anything hard about Sidney, or anybody, but a man's not the less a gentleman because he chooses to support himself. You've two gentlemen in the family out of the three. I can't stay at home and hunt with my brother Tom, for he has only two horses; and I can't afford to live with Sidney in chambers. There isn't a family-living, and if there was I wouldn't take it. You'd better lend me the money, Sir, and let me go."

And so it came to pass, that with perfect good faith and good-humour on both sides, but with a clear conviction that Frank Dillon was ruining his prospects, and to be mentioned only with an "aside" in the county henceforth, he went out to seek his fortunes. When he was spoken of at all, it was with an apology, or in an apologetic tone or manner. "Frank was always eccentric;" "We don't hear much about him;" "His brother seems

to see but little of him ; ” “ We hope it may all turn out for the best ; ” “ We don’t mention it before dear papa ; ” &c. &c. The *mauvais sujet* of the Dillons, however, came down at Christmas, looking much as usual ; taking a day’s shooting, and a day’s hunting on one of the family horses ; and never troubling his father for money, a fact so remarkable that the old gentleman became quite reconciled to the existence of a commercial element, as long as it was not needlessly obtruded upon him.

From the day that Frank Dillon went into business, he never allowed an inclination for anything beyond it to affect him. He found his reminiscences of Eton occasionally obtrusive. He had none to share them, so he washed them out at once. He had but one thing to do, and he did it effectually. He had his amusements, of course, but he had no taste but for steady industry, and he encouraged none. Woe be to the man with a passion, whether for horseflesh or gardening ; there is but one difference, the expense.

“ Come to Lord’s, Dillon, and see the gentlemen make mincemeat of the players ? ” said a less particular fellow-clerk.

“ Haven’t time ; I want to get forward with my work for to-morrow.”

“ And what will you do to-morrow ? ” enquires the tempter.

“ The work for the day after. There’s always something to do for those who can do it.”

“ What a fellow you are ! I thought you were fond of cricket.”

“ I was, and shall be again some day.”

And so Frank Dillon went on. When there was nothing to do he made work. There was always some detail of business to be mastered; and when he could, he read English history, foreign politics, financial history, and such light articles as the Currency Question; or, Capital and Labour. He made himself a very useful servant indeed, while he was one; and prepared the road for a successful mastership.

Not one day did he wait longer than was necessary before going into business on his own account. His salary was ample for more than his wants, and had been so long before his emancipation. City men are always liberal when they can get exactly what they want: a certain habit of living much and well from hand to mouth makes payment an easier matter to them, practically, than it would at first appear. We need not stop to analyse the proverb of "light come, light go," any more than its English. The worst paymasters are those who have plenty of money, but never deal in it, or see it. An earl, with a hundred thousand a year, will build a church through his steward, and an order on his banker, but he will quarrel with a poor man about a hundred pounds, and keep him waiting for it for a twelvemonth. So I need hardly say that Frank Dillon had plenty of tempting offers to remain another year or two in bondage.

Not a day, not an hour. Into the thick of it he went. He felt his capability, and it was soon acknowledged by others. His income increased, but he never relaxed a muscle from his work. It grew larger and larger rapidly—almost day by day. He was a speculator—a gamester, if you will—in his business, but no gambler; and he was

followed by clever and safe men with an eagerness and industry more flattering than pleasant. His income was now changing into capital, and he began to count in thousands. All the time, too, he lived; everything he had was good, excellently unostentatious. He indulged in a clever hack or two, and a stall at the opera. His brother Sidney had written home to astonish the family with the facts of his luxury; and he had himself sent many a stronger testimonial of his success already to his sisters. He had lent his father three thousand pounds to pay off a mortgage on one of his farms. We say lent, for he received a hypothetical three per cent. upon the loan. It was what his father was pleased to call a matter of business. Like other hypotheses, it went to prove an absurdity.

"I wish you'd go to the Crystal Palace to-morrow with us, Dillon? Cunliffe and I want to lionise it well, and have a dinner."

"No, thank you, not to-morrow. I can't take a holiday."

"You never do."

"I'll go yachting with you for six weeks in the autumn, or dine with you to-morrow, if you'll make the dinner late enough; but I never leave the City till late." So he went on for the next ten years.

Men who live in this way have not much time for falling in love. Some say that their occupation hardens them, renders them suspicious or diffident. Frank Dillon had not escaped altogether. He had seen a woman or two, with whom he thought he might have been happy, but had no time to recur to the subject just at present.

When he did recur to it the women were already married.

But at length he had accomplished his object. He was independent. He was still a young man when he had put by a hundred thousand pounds, and had a handsome income from his business besides. So he had time to think of something else. He had begun to recultivate his tastes ; was seen at Lord's at the great matches ; took some good shooting for the autumn, as far as the grouse disease and Scotch burning would allow ; drove a very neat brougham ; kept a couple of good hacks ; and was seen at least twice a week in his stall in the third row. He had had a small house in Mayfair for some time past, and as he went occasionally into society, he became a subject of speculation on 'Change and off it. The women who had some money wanted some more. The sisters of his City friends vied with each other in attentions. His brother Sydney dragged him among his former friends, old friends of the family he had disgraced, and exhibited him on the outskirts of the aristocracy. Old Etonians knocked him up when in town, and seemed ambitious of his acquaintance for their mothers and sisters. He had not been long in discovering that there were other views than those of his father as to the pursuits of a gentleman ; and that a hundred thousand pounds and a good business on either side of Temple Bar was not incompatible with good society. At all events, society couldn't do without it, and the *bien-gantées* kissed their hands to Frank from carriages and broughams which would have satisfied the severest criticisms of the Devonshire squirearchy.

In one of the suburbs of London—in a quiet little house, something after the fashion of a cottage, as far as ivy and porches go towards that formation—there lived a good-looking old lady, with a couple of daughters. She was the widow of a clergyman, who had held the incumbency of the parish not far from the squire's residence, and had known him and his family for several years of her married life. On her husband's death, she had collected the remnants of his property and her own, paid her dilapidations, like a lady as she was, and come to London with her two daughters. They were extremely pretty girls, accomplished and ladylike: and with just that amount of worldly weakness which preferred a more modest economy in a strange neighbourhood to a rather dependent position on sufferance amongst those, who remembered rather what they had been than considered what they intrinsically were. They had been in the suburbs of London about three months, when Frank heard of the lady's arrival; and riding out in that direction, had gone in to call upon his old acquaintance. Mrs. Tremaine received him as might be expected; and, accustomed to regard him rather as the working man, or male Cinderella, of the Dillon family, was somewhat taken aback at the very neat groom and the manifestly good horses with which he made his visit. The girls had grown prettier, Frank thought, especially the younger, who was now about nineteen; and when he went away, he promised the widow, and himself too, to repeat his call. He certainly meant it; but he was a heavy bear of Canadas at that time; and as they went up and down in a very mysterious manner before they settled to a down-

ward tendency, Frank forgot all about Helen Tremaine for the time, and never showed his face on Sandstead Common for three months. His visit was almost forgotten there. Then he came again and found another inmate of the cottage. Mrs. Tremaine had a nephew, Louis Dundas, the son of a brother who had come to grief because he would be a gentleman. His only son had most unfortunately imbibed the paternal notions upon this subject; but the absolute state of impecuniosity in which he found himself, compelled him to accept of a clerkship in an insurance office, by which he got one hundred a year for scanty and grudgingly-given services. It is not too much to say that Louis Dundas was eminently handsome, almost beautiful, generous, accomplished, amusing, and most lovable. But he was as idle, and as indifferent to the claims of his master on his time, as if no such relationship existed between men.

His aunt found him in London, idling, if not doing worse, in a lodging by himself—where coals, candles, stray coppers, and cold meat, were at the mercy of the landlady and charwoman, who stood in. Of course, she took him home; and once established at Sandstead Common, he never returned. His handsome gray eyes laughed at his aunt's account of domestic peculation to which he had been subject; and though he had known it to be true, he would have resisted nothing short of the absolute abstraction of his purse.

"Well, Louis, I suppose you're quite a man of business now;" he was just nineteen, and had as much idea of statistics as a vulture has of an *omelette-soufflée*.

"Oh yes, aunt, quite; and how I do hate it! They

are such a set of snobs in our office ;” and he was not far wrong perhaps. “ I wish they did not begin quite so early ; one must go by the first train.”

“ It isn’t a great hardship to start at nine,” said Helen, “ and you’re only twenty minutes on the road. I wonder you’re not late sometimes.”

“ I have been twice, since I’ve been here ; luckily the chief wasn’t come, so they said nothing. The sub’s very fond of me.”

But as Louis continued to be late, the sub got less fond of him, and the chief expostulated in a mild way ; but gave Louis Dundas to understand that he must be a little more regular.

So when Frank Dillon arrived the next time he found a new face in the cottage ; and its smiles and good-humour and good looks made a pleasant impression upon him ; but somehow he couldn’t help wishing, when he went away, that the new comer had not been so very handsome and so very charming.

The peculiarity of Frank Dillon’s career had not had an entirely beneficial effect upon his disposition. It had made him suspicious of motives in other people, diffident of his own powers of pleasing, and more reliant upon his hundred thousand pounds than he ought to have been. It had given him, too, an older manner than he otherwise would have had. So he thought for about six months more before he went to the cottage again. Then he went with a purpose ; and it came about in the most natural manner possible.

Lady Middleton had a villa, not a cottage, at Sandstead Common, and was the Lady Bountiful of the place, *i.e.* as

far as suburban districts boast such things. She was very fond of Frank Dillon, in her way, patronised him, liked his straightforward talk, and his unaffected acknowledgment of his position, of which (without that common vulgarity of forcing it down your throat) he was noways ashamed. Affectation is vulgarity, but there is none equal to ostentatious humility; that is the very vulgarest affectation of all. Lady Middleton, therefore, requested the pleasure of Frank Dillon's company to dinner, as she had done once or twice before, and which he had declined, from a prophetic knowledge of what he might expect: fish and claret, cold: room and champagne, hot: entrées and women in turbans, endless; and the salt of the conversation transferred to the olives. Now Frank Dillon accepted it, and took his chance, and took in to dinner Helen Tremaine. A fortnight later, and he cantered down to Lady Middleton's about five o'clock, calling on his way at the cottage.

"I have known them a long time—ever since they were children, till I came to town. Their father held an incumbency in our county, not far from Dillon Hollow."

"And how do you like them?" enquired Lady Middleton, going straight to the point in the most artless manner.

"Exceedingly. I always have; but I've had very little time or opportunity to cultivate ladies' acquaintance."

"And which do you prefer, Mr. Dillon?" for Lady Middleton was encouraged by the simplicity of Frank's answer.

"Helen, much! She is handsomer, and more attrac-

tive ; very cheerful, and utterly free from affectation. Her sister is a nice girl, but not all that."

"The eldest is much the most accomplished ; she sketches and sings really extremely well ; only imagine, too, she has been self-taught."

"So I should imagine. I always buy my accomplishments ready-made, and I find them better than any that I get for nothing." Then Frank Dillon paused, and after a few seconds, as if he divined the old lady's thoughts, he added : "Helen, ah ! Helen might make a charming wife."

"Then, why don't you take her, Sir ?" and as the lady had no daughters of her own to recommend, she may be forgiven for her excitement in the interests of a neighbour. The dormant vices of old women are very apt to develop themselves in match-making. "You know that she's of a very good family, I suppose. Her father was first cousin to Lord ——."

"I don't particularly care," began Frank ; when, finding he might be saying something rude to his hostess, he added, "I've family pride enough for both."

"To be sure, she's no money," continued she, not heeding the commenced insult, or the apologetic conclusion of the former speech.

"I've enough of that, too, for both," said Frank, in the same tone.

"You, Mr. Dillon ! What, are you going to marry Helen Tremaine ?"

"Indeed, I don't know ; that's a difficult question to answer."

"I should think in your position it was a very easy

one. Am I to congratulate you? Are you engaged to her?"

"Certainly not."

"Then what do you mean, Mr. Dillon?"

"A man might be going to marry a girl without being engaged to her, Lady Middleton. Perhaps I might be engaged to her if I knew her better."

"Don't you hate London on a Sunday?" said the old lady. "I do."

"Yes, I do," rejoined Frank Dillon. "I always go to Greenwich or Richmond."

"Do better, Sir! Come here on Saturday and stay for a day or two. Send your servant, and we'll try to make you comfortable; for Johnson has had so many old women to deal with since poor Sir Henry's death that he's become one himself."

And Frank Dillon agreed to go.

His visit was not thrown away, for a fortnight after he made a rather definite visit to the cottage, and continued to do so indefinitely for a couple of months, at which time he was married to Helen Tremaine. Some said it was a most fortunate match for the girl. Those persons who valued money, and what it purchases, more than anything else, were unanimous. It was a great thing for a girl who had once had to walk wherever she went, to dress her sister's hair, to mend and make her own clothes, and to think whether she gave a pensioner sixpence or threepence, to have one of the handsomest carriages in London, to have a lady's-maid of her own, and to give money here, there, and everywhere, as she pleased, out of an ample allowance. Others seemed to think that

Frank Dillon had not much the worse of the contract. He had a young and beautiful girl for his wife, the wife of a man young enough to marry, but old enough to have put up with something older and more *rusée*. She had good temper, good manners, good sense; what did he want more? She was well worth the money. Besides, he had some bachelor habits, which Helen Tremaine had not been accustomed to; and a sort of silent humour and morose gravity, engendered by long habits of abstinence from society and of business, to which it would be her duty to submit. They were perfectly satisfied themselves, which was the main point, and cared very little for the conjectures of their neighbours.

And they were unmistakably happy. How should they be otherwise? Both had all they desired. Her childlike pleasure in every novelty delighted him ten thousand times more than if she had been passing through the ordinary phase of her existence. He had such pleasure in giving, such genuine happiness in surprising her with new dresses, new ponies, a horse to ride with him in the park, and an opera-box in lieu of his stall; and he was so generous to her mother and sister, and thought he never could do enough for them. He had always a treat in store for those whom Helen loved: and even Louis Dundas came in for a full share of such enjoyments. It didn't improve his chance at the insurance office; but Frank Dillon had satisfied himself with very vague enquiries about his new cousin Louis, and thought he did enough in sending him tickets for the theatre, or cards for a launch and a *déjeuner*, whenever he had the opportunity. His handsome face showed itself occasionally in

Mayfair; and always found a ready welcome from his cousin as from everybody else.

"Frank," said Mrs. Dillon, one morning in the winter, when they had returned to town from the seaside, "I wish you would do something for me." She was standing on the rug, and Frank was opposite to her, warming himself in the way that he had always warmed himself before marriage.

"Anything in the world, Nelly; a new pony to match the gray?"

"Worse than that, Frank. Do something for Louis. He hates his work, and has no chance of anything for years to come. The most he can get is an income of some six hundred a year."

"Not a bad one either; I lived upon less."

"For how long? And then, poor fellow, he'll never be able to marry."

Here Frank laughed. "That's a terrible blow." But he smoothed his wife's hair on her temples with his hands, and kissed her forehead. Then he lit a cigar, and thought for a few minutes. "And what does your Cousin Louis want?"

"He wants to go into the City."

"He is there, or ought to be, eight hours of every day."

"You know what I mean. He wants to go on the Stock Exchange."

"That's because he thinks I made money there without work. I'll see what can be done." And away he went, hailing a cab as he turned the corner.

Frank went to the City, cogitating on his wife's request. Personally he liked Louis Dundas, as did everybody; but

his life had been passed in studying men, not books ; and when men buy and sell daily what they have not got, a knowledge of your customer is a great point gained.

“A rolling stone gathers no moss,” said Frank to himself ; and then he dismissed the subject from his thoughts until he called a cab and drove home.

One of the charms of Frank’s married life was the sympathy which his wife felt and expressed for him in his business, and in all that concerned him in the City as well as in his home. Within one month of the honeymoon she knew something about account-day, and the balance being out ; within three more she had some not very confused notions of the difference of bulls, bears, time bargains, and sales for the account ; and not long afterwards had ascertained that a “cotango” meant “touching somebody else’s money with your hand,” although she had commenced married life in a belief that it was a new animal presented by Frank Buckland to the Zoological Gardens.

“Have you been very busy, Frank ?” said she, taking her seat at table, not opposite to her husband, but by his side.

“Yes, very—and my partner is away. Canadas are down, as I thought they would be.”

“I’m glad of it, Frank : because you’re a bear of them. You see I know all about it. And did you think of Louis ? Mamma is so anxious about him.”

“Yes, I did ; and I’ll tell you what I’ve done. I don’t believe in Louis as a working man : but I can’t help liking him : so I’ve taken him into my own office, as I

could not conscientiously recommend him to anybody else."

"Oh, Frank, how good you are ! I know that was for my sake." And she got up from table and thanked her husband in the way she knew he liked best.

From that day Louis Dundas changed his occupation. He was not much better fitted for the one than the other ; though there could be very little doubt which best suited the young man's inclinations. When there was little or nothing to do, he did it : when there was a busy time, as on account-days or in getting out the balance, he allowed others to do it for him. His career presented a singular contrast to that of his master. He omitted no opportunity of taking a holiday whenever he could ; and he was never at a loss to find amusement or associates. His tastes were universal, and he was as popular as if he had inherited twenty thousand a year. He was assiduous in his attentions to his Cousin Helen, and as he was sometimes kept in town late, he always contrived to find a seat at Frank's dinner-table twice or three times a fortnight.

There is a certain indelicacy in the minds of some women, which suggests the necessity of extraordinary security ; and makes them prescient of attentions long before they are paid. Women,

"Hinnuleo similes——"

"Quærenti pavidam montibus aviis
Matrem, non sine vano
Aururum et silvæ metu ;"

always on the look-out for danger : always in search of

mamma, or in want of a sheep-dog: with a very vain fear of every breath—of scandal. And there are others whose purity secures them utterly from any uneasiness on their own account, but which brings down upon them the censure and condemnation of the suspicious and uncharitable. Now Helen Dillon was of this latter sort. In the present case she was not even imprudent; but she happened to tread upon Frank Dillon's softest corn.

First of all, knowing her husband's habits of industry and love of discipline, Helen was foolish in encouraging Louis to idle, which she did by giving him commissions to execute. All women, whose time is not well filled, create wants for themselves. Now there was no great harm in Helen's wants, and they might all have been gratified. But no man felt a greater pleasure than Frank in being his wife's commission-agent. And it would have been better for them both that she had allowed her good-looking cousin to do his work in Capel Court, instead of hers at the West End. Frank said nothing about it, but he felt it to be absurd to say the least of it, and it was so. Helen was always sending little notes to Louis by her husband; an incongruity, when repeated, which did not appear at first sight, and when very occasionally resorted to. Then there came a sort of understanding between them, simple enough, but not judicious in the presence of so indulgent a husband, whose only fault was a peculiarity of disposition, which arose from habit of life. For example:

"Louis," said Helen Dillon, "go to Carlin's for me, as you go into the City, and pick two of the very best boxes of cigars you can find. I want to give them to

Frank. The very best, mind ; and there's ten pounds to pay for them. I heard him say that he couldn't afford some which he liked, they cost so much. On no account let him know anything about it."

In two or three days' time, the good woman, forgetting her caution, says to Louis at dinner, "Did you do what I told you to do?"

Louis has almost forgotten what she means, but suddenly recollects, and mysteriously answers : "All right : it will be done to-morrow."

"What's that ?" says Frank.

"Never you mind, Sir," replies the best of women ; "it's something between me and Louis, which doesn't concern you."

That was imprudent and untrue ; and as it was constantly happening about all sorts of domestic evils, as baby's caps, or socks, or a subscription to the Cholera Fund, or a servant's institution, or new rosettes for the carriage horses, to say nothing of hundreds of presents to mamma and her sister, to all of which her husband was as anxious to contribute as she, a very, very little source of occasional irritation was becoming permanent.

In the meantime, Louis was delighted with City work, and having no ambition beyond well-made clothes, French boots, and neat collars and ties, he got on pretty well upon his allowance. Only as he could not say "no" to anything, from the odds on the Cesarewitch to a pint of stout, as long as any one would suggest either the one or the other, he began to get a little in debt.

This annoyed him ; for he had not been accustomed to any sort of failure in his obligations, beyond pilfering

time from his employers ; and that he regarded as fair gain. As he was very open, his aunt soon knew it, and his elder cousin. Frank Dillon never troubled himself about such petty larceny as this, but he suspected the truth very shrewdly, from the something more than regularity with which Louis drew his account. Mrs. Tremaine felt inclined to talk to her son-in-law about Louis Dundas, but she didn't do so : so the evil went on increasing. Louis himself had an easy way of forgetting his troubles, excepting when something more pressing than usual used to remind him of them ; and then he was very sorrowful, and made a thousand good resolutions, which lasted until the next opportunity for breaking them.

But though Mrs. Tremaine did not care to speak to her son-in-law about such trifles, she did talk to Helen ; and Helen talked in her turn to Louis, which created further mystery, and increased the marital irritation. Once, and once only, he gave way to his inclination, and mentioned the possibility of empty scandal to his wife : "People will talk : " and though he said nothing about it, he felt the difference of his own age and that of his wife ; quite unnecessarily, it is true, but not unnaturally. Upon that occasion Mrs. Dillon laughed so heartily, and enjoyed the joke so manifestly, that he found himself unexpectedly all in the wrong. By way of making up for any apparent suspicion, the week after he gave her a cheque for fifty pounds, and desired her to spend it after her own fashion.

"And what shall I buy with it, Frank ? I've everything I wish for."

"Anything you like ; don't ask me. Do whatever you like with the money."

And so she did. She carried it straight to her mother, who was compelled to accept it, as she had done on other occasions when Frank Dillon had shared in the gratification of helping the widow-lady and his sister-in-law.

This time Mrs. Tremaine put it to another use. She gave it to Louis Dundas.

"Louis, change this cheque for me, and bring me twenty-five pounds back. I want to make you a little present, which I could not do on your birthday. You need not be ashamed to accept it from me. The other half is for Laura. I am sure the money is more useful to you just now than anything I could buy with it." And it was ; so Louis Dundas accepted the present with a profusion of thanks, and paid the cheque away over a counter, where he was asked to write his name upon the back of it, and he did so. The twenty-five pounds made three people happy at once—the aunt who gave it, the nephew who received it, and the tradesman whose little bill it went to pay ; but the end was not yet, and the fifty-pound cheque did not give pleasure to everybody.

"Well, Nelly, what have you bought? The bracelet from Turner's, or the necklace from Storr and Mortimer's?"

"Neither, Frank ; nor the shawl from Lewis and Allenby's, nor the Dresden group, nor the prize fan with the painting from Watteau. You said I was to do as I liked with it, and I bought nothing. I gave it away."

"I can guess who to ; and I'm glad of it. Another time let me have half the pleasure of giving." Helen only smiled and blushed, and said that he should.

There happened to be a slight informality in this cheque. For the first time in his life Frank had forgotten the date, or some petty detail, and it was sent back to him only to be rectified, when presented by the tradesman to whom Louis had given it. On turning it over he saw Louis's name on the back. The impression upon his mind was not a pleasant one. It might have saved him and his wife some pain if he had simply asked her to whom she had really given the fifty pounds, instead of having jumped to a hasty conclusion. However, he was too proud to ask any questions now ; and if she was so absurd as to help her cousin in his extravagances, he could not help it. She had only done what she liked with her own. He would not give her another chance. As to Louis himself, he might have got rid of him fifty times over on good grounds ; he was too just to do so, because his own wife chose to make a fool of herself.

Frank Dillon, from living much alone to a certain time of life, had become very reticent. He loved to cherish a grievance. He was the honestest man alive, but not very open ; so he brooded over his self-inflicted anxiety, instead of forbidding the intercourse between his wife and her cousin, or sending the latter out of his office, when the opportunities of their communication would have been so much fewer. He was incapable of positive unkindness upon such grounds of suspicion, but there was a cold mistrustfulness of manner which was far more intolerable to Helen than personal difference would have

been. She too was so delightfully unconscious of having given any cause of offence that she failed to see at first that there was anything the matter, and set down Frank's silence and gravity to the state of the market — an Atlas on whose shoulders any amount of domestic uneasiness may be shifted. With the view of putting him in good-humour, she was more light-hearted than ever, and proposed half a dozen expeditions of pleasure, in which Louis Dundas was as usual to participate; but Frank Dillon was not to be done into good-humour until the affair was cleared up, and as his pride would not allow him to explain, and nobody else had an explanation belonging to them, there seemed likely to be no end to the mystery. In three weeks, from being the happiest, the most cheerful couple in Christendom, they had become the most miserable, uncomfortable, and suspicious of married people.

"Louis, you haven't dined at Helen's this week past," said his aunt.

"Not I; it's so confoundedly stupid. They never talk; and as to Frank, he's so polite I don't mean to go there any more till he alters. I can't think what's the matter. You've never said anything to either of them about my going abroad, have you? Australia's a long way off, but it's a capital opening. The salary's good, and I shall get out of the set I'm in row. I can't help spending more money, and I'm sure I shall never make it here." There seemed very little likelihood of his doing so, it must be confessed.

Some little time after, Mrs. Tremaine and Laura had been spending a day or two in town with Frank Dillon

and his wife ; and as mothers-in-law are close critics of their daughters' husbands, the alteration in the manner of the former could not escape the quick observation of either lady. They had plenty of interesting conversation to amuse them. Louis's new intentions and propensity for rolling, baby's teeth, the Paris Exhibition, the diminution of bonnets and absence of crinolines, the legitimate drama, Prince Christian—everything, in fact, but the new Latin Primer, of which they knew nothing. Having exhausted these subjects, and many others, Mrs. Tremaine turned suddenly to her daughter, and said :

“What was the matter with Frank last night, my dear? I never saw him so out of spirits as he seems to be.”

“I'm sure I don't know, mamma. The balance is not out, I suppose.”

“Dear me, what a very odd thing it must be !” said the elder lady, relapsing at once into silence and a severe train of thought.

But the longest lane has a turning, just as continual wet weather comes to an end some day, and it occurred suddenly to Frank that he had been rather too bad—that after all there really was nothing it—that Helen in reality (that is, apart from her ignorance of the world) was just as good and affectionate a wife as ever lived—that he knew no harm in the world of Louis excepting his idleness, only that if he would be persuaded to go out of the City—well, it would be pleasanter. He thought over these things, and began to conjecture how he could return to his usual good-humour without compromise or explanation, as he returned from the East, the quarter whence wise men come, and he hit upon a plan

at once. "She wants those ponies, and she shall have them. We'll take them into the country, and have them put into condition for next season. That will delight her. As to putting her in good-humour, she's never been out of it."

"Nelly, dear," said he, as the fish went off the table, "we'll have some of your champagne to-day, if you like." It was very good, very full-flavoured, very expensive, but not so dry as some that Tod-Heatley furnishes to his best customers. Nelly acquiesced, and looked as bright and happy as if there never had been a cloud in the distance threatening her.

"Do you know those pretty ponies of Lady Mary Hinckley are for sale? They are going abroad; as tallow, of which he was a great holder, is down, and the ponies are to be had for a couple of hundred."

"Oh! I should like them." Then she suddenly recollected herself, and said: "But should you mind my spending the money in any other way that I liked?" Frank looked rather blank at this proposal, for it brought back to him an uncomfortable sensation, attributable to the system of natural mnemonics; however, he never did things by halves, and he thought he was pretty safe this time.

"No, dear, certainly not. But perhaps I can help you, and let you have the ponies too?"

"I think not, for I want to be very extravagant."

"Well, what is it? Is it to new furnish the cottage for mamma?"

"No: thanks to you, mamma has enough."

"A trousseau for Laura?"

"Don't be a donkey. No, I want it for Louis Dundas."

Frank rose from the table, where he was drinking some excellent claret and eating olives, and putting both hands in his pockets, looked at his wife with the most perfect astonishment and considerable severity.

"Nelly, you'll forgive me ; but I cannot help giving you one word of advice on that subject. There may be no harm in your conduct : I'm not so silly as to believe there is ; but if you knew the world as well as I do, you would not invite its condemnation so openly as you have done."

Nelly stared with unfeigned astonishment, and the gentleman continued :

"Do you know that that last cheque for fifty pounds which you gave him was accidentally returned to my hands, and though I would willingly give ten fifties to do him any good, your encouragement of his extravagant habits is a simple madness?"

Nelly's astonishment was increasing rapidly, and no wonder.

"The fifty pounds I gave to Louis ! Why, Frank, you know I gave it to mamma." And now Mrs. Dillon stood opposite, hardly knowing whether to resent the injustice by a flood of tears. She reserved that infallible weapon of woman's armoury, and added : "You must have known it, for you said at the time that you guessed where it was gone."

Frank began to feel that he had made another false step, a thing he never had done as a bachelor, but which happens to married men sometimes,

“But Louis Dundas must have changed it——”

“Most likely he did, for mamma. There was nothing very odd in that, Frank.” She felt that she had a good deal the best of the battle, but she was too fond of her husband to make much of her vantage-ground. She couldn’t help one little tear which ran over and dropped upon his hand, as he pressed her head closer and closer to him, and said: “And now, Sir, will you let me have the money to do what I like with?”

“Yes, my love; as much as you want; and you shall have the ponies too.”

From that day forth Frank Dillon was himself again; and in consideration of his good behaviour, or of repeated invitations, Louis Dundas took his usual place at Helen’s table, where he and Frank’s barrister-brother got on remarkably well together. At the end of a fortnight, and just before the close of the season, Helen drove down to the cottage, and after a long conversation of the usual interesting nature between mothers and married daughters, as she got up to return to town, she said: “So, you understand, Frank insists upon taking everything on his own shoulders—the passage, outfit, and all preliminary expenses—for Louis. He thinks his prospects excellent, and says he ought to return a young man with a handsome fortune. He’s in capital spirits, and wants you all to go down and dine together at Greenwich on Saturday.”

“Then, Helen dear, I suppose that stupid balance is out at last.”



THE OLD TALE WITH A NEW END.



SUPPOSE but few persons have lived to the age of ten years without being assailed by what is called the "tender passion." I have no idea why so ruthless a pest should have received so palpable a misnomer : but so it is ; and I acquiesce, just as I should if the yellow fever were to be called a "mild indisposition." Whether it be a tender passion or not, you may ask the misanthropic old maid, the misogynist, the spendthrift exile, the broken-down gambler, the faded beauty, the drooping flowers, or the dark eddies and depths of the Thames or the Seine. They tell me that there is no such thing as a broken heart. I never had one : I do not know that I ever saw one ; but I don't believe them. Few, perhaps, and far between. They get over it nicely. Time does wonders : and dress. No man in drab shorts could be possessed of such a luxury ; and I don't think leathers and tops at all symptomatic of the disease. But ritualism is ; so is rash marriage, and early death : for some of the weaker sex die and make no sign.

And is there no cure, no remedy for it? I cannot say

much about the later stages of the disease. The cure is slow, laborious, difficult ; not always complete when most it seems so. When taken early, when it is in truth a tender passion, there is less difficulty ; and the stronger the measures, the more thoroughly effective. Having suffered in all stages, I can speak *ex cathedrâ* ; for some persons are more susceptible than others : and as philosophy has attributed to man a blank sheet of paper in lieu of a mind, I can only say that some is blotting-paper, capable of absorbing any influence, while some is so well prepared with worldly polish as to resist any but the strongest impressions.

Amongst the other characteristics of love, one of the most remarkable is its ambition. Poets have delighted to sing its strength and power of resistance or aggression ; but practically its ambition is the main feature in its early development. It is difficult to say at what period of life it can exhibit itself, but most undoubtedly in the juvenile it is accompanied by an ardent longing for something entirely out of reach. The alchemist in search of the philosopher's stone, or the adept in pursuit of the universal medicine, were not further removed from the object of their affections than I was when I first fell seriously in love.

I was but a boy (but that's nothing against the fact), and I was at school (which ought to have been a damper). I know no such antidote to the ardour of youthful affection as the Eton Latin Grammar. If the New Primer has nothing else to recommend it, I think synthesis, analysis, predicate, complement, finite and infinite, are words incompatible with what I felt under the Old Primer. Let

us hope they may prove so, and that the minds of the rising generation may be so impressed with their value as to bestow none of its attention on objects of sense. Besides the Latin Grammar, too, the fine old system of discipline, the fagging, the flogging, the bad dinners, and systematic coercion, were against anything tender. A boy condemned to a hard mattress and scanty bedclothes, to a public pump and a jack-towel, to early chapel and anti-jentacular (I believe that's the right thing now) repetition, ought not to have been so susceptible, as one nursed in feather-bed and eider-down, warm water and dry stockings, Turkey carpets and moral philosophy, should be. Be that as it may, the disease settled upon me, and its development and cure are sufficiently remarkable to be worth notice.

It was towards the end of the winter, a very great many years ago, that the universally popular school at which I was then being educated received intelligence of an intended inspection from royalty. Nothing could be more flattering to the pride of Dr. Trimmer, a great scholar and pedagogue, and one who was known to have set his powerful mind on a bishopric: an honour in those days accorded not to the profundity of theological research, the tendencies of religious party, or the experiences of pastoral wants, but to a knowledge of the Aristophanic metres and the Aristotelian philosophy. Such men were certainly none the less fitted for the office; for if they had no strong feelings to recommend them, they had no prejudices at least to overcome. And if the doctor was pleased — if he announced, after evening chapel of the day before, the gracious intention with un-

checked pride—the boys were not a whit slower to perceive the advantages of the visit, in the holiday it necessitated, and in the series of holidays of which it was certain to be the precursor. We were, happily, free from the comments which modern economists have made on the present invariable addition of a week, or a few days, to the legitimate vacation. If fathers will have sons at Eton and Harrow, they must put up with the inconveniences attending those institutions; and as to a royal marriage or christening taking place without such marks of distinction, the thing is inconceivable. What other compensation can be made to the juvenile world for the number of princes and princesses it is called upon to honour, or what good fortune could be expected for the infants brought into the world under any other assurance? Are there not three to be hoped for at present; and does it not seem that a time may come when Christmas may be joined to Easter in one felicitous vacation? I quite well remember that we participated in the manifest gratification of Dr. Trimmer, and that we were not disappointed in our hopes.

Ah! my young friends, and some of my older ones, have you not trembled with delight when the lady, the highest personage in the realm, has driven slowly past you, criticising your warlike aspects and apparatus? and what do you suppose were the sensations of three hundred and fifty youngsters, all in their best clothes, with their faces washed (and some of the hands too), when the same august lady of seventeen summers only paid us the same compliment?—when she not only inspected our ranks, but listened with profound attention and apparent

intelligence to an original oration in the Latin tongue. It was a proud day too for Smith Major, when he stood forth and sang the power, the praises, and the beauty of his future sovereign in Greek Iambics, in which there was only one false quantity : and when he received the thanks of the princess, and the murmured approbation of the ladies-in-waiting.

But I anticipate. I don't know what the sensations of three hundred and forty-nine boys were, to say nothing of seventeen or eighteen masters—of arts and otherwise—(the wonderful manner indeed in which these latter tumbled over each other and themselves on backing out from presentation said more for their loyalty than for their presence of mind), I can only speak of one. The cavalcade passed up the magnificent schools, and presented to my ravished senses a floating cloud of silk, satin, muslin, jewellery, and bonnets. Bonnets, I say, in their integrity of size and dignity ; and not the crown pieces (if I may so express myself without that vulgarest of all witticisms, a pun) of the present day, which is all the change given out of two guineas and a half by the fashionable milliners of Bond Street or Regent Street. "*Minimo me provocat*" may well bear a new interpretation by the old-fashioned admirers of Horace, though what the ladies have lost from their head-gear they have well made up for by amplitude lower down. If my general notion of the advanced guard was somewhat obscure, as I raised my eyes with a mixture of timidity and curiosity, there was one spot that riveted my gaze, and which presented itself then and for ever, with remarkable contrast to my otherwise vague impressions. Amidst the

crowd of aristocratic beauties I saw really but one. At this distance of time I have forgot neither my emotions nor the face. The eyes appeared, and indeed afterwards proved to be, large, lustrous, and dark; the complexion of the clearest and purest, with a *souffçon* of healthy colour; the mouth was small and well formed, showing a row of regular and lovely teeth within; the hair—well! as far as the bands in front went, nothing could be more luxuriant in colour or quantity, but I am honestly obliged to admit that my goddess wore no chignon. What back hair she had was modestly enclosed in the crown of the pink bonnet, which only went to aid the general effect. This may be to some a humiliating admission; to me it is not so: for it at least left the imagination free to employ itself on realities, while the monstrous exhibitions of our wives and daughters only tax that quality of the mind to discern how little may belong to nature and how much to art. If I say no more of the graceful proportions of the swan-like figure which I thus distinguished, of the tightly-fitting well-ordered robes which seemed no more inconvenient to the wearer than they were to those who walked beside or behind her, it is not that I am tired of the theme, but that I fear to tire you.

The ceremonies of the day, striking as they undoubtedly were, have long faded from my mind. There was that happily-blended dignity and condescension which always distinguishes the royalty of this country, and which approaches to actual kindness as closely as circumstances and decorum will permit. There was the natural grace which belongs pre-eminently to the Fellows of colleges in Oxford and Cambridge, when brought face to

face with extraordinary rank or beauty, which conceals the awkwardness of as much loyalty as can be got under a cap and gown. There was the disinterested reverence of a great scholar and bishop in "*posse*," widely different from the self-supporting consequence of the celebrated Dr. Busby, of Westminster, who possibly had nothing to get by not removing his hat in the presence of Charles II. and his scholars. There were the before-mentioned speeches and forms befitting such an occasion; and the *déjeuner*, as reported by the head boy, on a scale of magnificence, which taxed the talents of all the cooks and confectioners in the country. I can easily believe it.

Everybody has heard of the solitude of great cities. Public schools are singularly deficient in that Zimmerman-like qualification. It was nothing that, as time wore on, I had ventured to look steadily once or twice at my innamorata. Once or twice; could it be fancy? I thought, too, that she distinguished me. I withdrew my gaze, and blushed deeply. I was only fifteen, it must be remembered, and was dressed in my very best clothes and style—a tightly-fitting jacket and still more tightly-fitting trousers, with a turned-down collar. I wore a ring, too, which I hoped she could not fail to remark. I saw Bob Carew's eyes fixed upon me; and as he honoured me with a significant wink, I determined upon making a clean breast of it at the earliest opportunity.

Bob and I were in the same study. He was a sort of universal genius in his way, excepting in the way of verses, which I did for him. He played the guitar by ear (now it would have been the banjo, but we were more refined then), sang little love songs, read Lalla Rookh, and

was a tremendous fellow for sport, especially connected with rats. I think he beat Mr. Frank Buckland at it. I'm sure he did in killing them. As to anything about the tender passion, Bob was as great an authority as Sir Lucius O'Trigger on the duel.

"I say, Charlie," said he, looking at me as I sat on the edge of the study after the fun was over, "did you see that charming little girl in a sort of blue gauze and a white straw bonnet, who stood behind the ——'s chair, on the platform, you know?"

"You mean a pink bonnet, Bob, with splendid eyes, and lovely hair——"

"What! that sallow girl? No, no, I don't. I mean a girl with blue eyes. Wasn't she a stunner?"

I don't approve of the expression excepting in connection with the prize ring, but truth is stronger than delicacy. Bob Carew, after all, was very like everybody else. He was only thinking of himself; so I didn't answer his question directly, but determined to stand up for my own rights.

"Sallow! well! I like that——" I began, when I was cut short with—

"That's a matter of taste. *Chacun à son goût.*" Amongst other things he interlarded his conversation occasionally, like our fashionable writers, with other modern languages than his own. I don't.

"By Jove," said I, "what wouldn't I give to know who she is!"

"I'll tell you what," observed Carew, once more oblivious of my claims on his attention, "that was a deuced good-looking fellow with the light moustache, by her side.

I know him. He's Spindle: my brother Tom is in his regiment."

"I don't see anything good-looking about him," said I, or something to that effect; nor did I. "Oh, Bob, I should so like to know who she is."

"You'll see in the ——— *Gazette*. All the swells will be down."

"But how shall I know? I wonder whether I shall ever see her again," and I heaved a sigh profound enough to have come from Cham instead of five feet six.

"See her again! of course you can, if you're so spooney as that comes to. Go to the meet with the hounds on Friday, at Lord Pontypool's. There's a great breakfast; and if you wait outside you'll be sure to see her."

"I don't see how I'm to do that;" but Bob Carew's resources were infinite.

"Take out an 'æger' to-morrow morning. They'll only think we had a slay in the studies to-day, and you over-ate yourself." If homely, the advice was good; so I thought over it for a few moments, and decided on adopting it.

There were two things essential to success—a horse and a costume. We attacked the last first.

"I'll lend you a pair of cord trousers," said Bob.

"Couldn't a fellow get breeches?" said I, feeling very naturally that a man's personal appearance was everything in such a crisis.

"Well," said he after deliberation, "you give me five shillings next merit-money day, and your rabbit net, and

I'll sell you the trousers ; then, you send 'em down to old Mother Goose and have 'em cut down. She'll make 'em into shorts in no time."

"Why old Mother Goose? Why, won't Sheers do 'em better?"

"Old Goose keeps my dog," rejoined Carew, which appeared conclusive of her capabilities as a breeches-maker. "Besides, Sheers is sure to split if there's a row." So I gave the promise and took the trousers to Mother Goose, who did her part well as the sequel proved.

"I've no boots, Bob," said I on second thoughts, and very melancholy ones; "so the breeches won't be of much use to me."

"Yes you have; you've a pair of Wellingtons. You get Cording to make you a pair of leggings to button on the outside. I often used to go out with my brother in the holidays. They look just as well as tops." And by this time I thought Carew one of the best fellows in the world. I think Mr. Bartley would not have approved so highly of this substitute, nor feared much for any competition of his inimitable productions.

The horse, as I knew, was a less complex business. It was a question of money or credit, and I set about it at once. I went straight to Knackerton's and demanded a hack for Friday; and I am sorry to say, so poor was my opinion of Knackerton, that I gave him no credit for any knowledge of the news of the day.

"A hack, young gentleman," said he, eyeing me askance, "it aint to go a-hunting mayhap? 'Cos I got a hunter, a right good 'un—only he's two guineas—and

he'll be let before the day's out, mind ye," and then he spread his legs out like a Colossus, put one hand in his pocket, and smoothed his chin with the forefinger and thumb of the other.

"No," replied I, boldly, for I hadn't money enough to speak the truth; "I'm not going hunting. I only want a horse for a ride."

"Wery good. I got the wery pony as 'ull suit you. He's wery handsome, and a gray, with a long tail. Where shall I send him?"

"Oh!" said I, alarmed at the prospect of his appearance down the school lane, "I'll come for him at half-past nine."

"Wery good, Sir; he shall be ready: and you'll excuse me, Sir, but this is a ready-money job in advance. It enables us to supply our customers with so much better a article." Saying which Mr. Knackerton touched his hat, and I congratulated myself that it was not to be a hunter at two pounds two.

I do not say much about the time which intervened between the school banquet and the meet at Lord Pontypool's. I dreamt, I know; for I happen to remember the very eccentric finish to my dream. I was riding up the middle aisle of a church, clothed in complete armour, excepting as to my head, which was bare. I carried in one hand a mediæval lance, in the other a shield. At the top of the aisle, on a raised dais, sat the lady of my love, who held a chaplet intended for me. Bishops, cardinals, priests, and a goodly throng of ladies and knights stood by, and I was advancing as the only one, like the highwayman, without whom the fun couldn't

begin, when the seven o'clock bell woke me to the realities of life.

Being "æger," and in excellent health, I turned round and had another snooze, while my schoolfellows went into chapel. I then rose, and having eaten a meagre breakfast, with my heart beating with impatience for the happiness in store for me, I slipt down to Mother Goose's. Then I was invested with my spurs of knighthood, after having admired, over and over again, the results of Mrs. Goose's cunning and Mr. Cording's industry. A back way took me to the confiding Knackerton's, and having paid him the half sovereign in advance, and mounted my gray horse, I started by unfrequented lanes for Pontypool Castle.

I reached it in as much safety as if I had been bound on a simple excursion on the London, Chatham, and Dover.

Pontypool Castle is an imposing-looking place, and on the day in question presented a most animated scene. The front of the house, the gardens, the stable-yard, were alive with drags, carriages, horsemen, and led horses. The hounds sat grouped around their huntsman outside of the iron hurdles, but in front of the drawing-room windows. Every window was occupied by spectators, even to the top of the house. I sat lost in amazement and perplexity, not unmingled with a doubt whether I should ever see the fair object of my search in such a crowd. I was inexpressibly relieved, not to say astonished, when a tall gentlemanly-looking man of about fifty years of age, whom I knew to be Lord Pontypool, singled me out from the miscellaneous crowd of sportsmen, and invited me to

breakfast. "You will find a man in the stable-yard, or somewhere about, who will take your horse."

I did find a man, who relieved me of my charge ; and an occasional qualm overtook me at breakfast when I reflected that I knew nothing of the one or the other, except that the latter was a gray. I wished I might recognise him again, which was exceedingly doubtful.

Now here I was ; positively in the very house ; under the same roof with my idol ; possibly within a few yards distance of her : and as I sat down at table between two gentlemen in scarlet, I wondered whether their spotless leathers were cognizant of their proximity to Goose's labours. That old woman deserved well of me : for it was at least clear that my externals had procured me the ecstatic enjoyment of the present moment. One of my neighbours was a good-natured person ; and between the cutlets and turkey, tongue, lobster, apricot-jam, tea, coffee, and champagne, in which we were indulging, made me acquainted with the magnates, rajahs, and three tailed mandarins of provinces, with whom I was for the time associated. I was in the middle of some highly-sensational plât, when a sudden cessation of knives, forks, and conversation ensued, and every one as suddenly rose to his legs. I did as the rest, and, with my mouth full and my eyes open, beheld once more the vision which had, on a previous occasion, so bewildered me.

"The ——," said my cicerone, good-naturedly, directing my attention to a group of magnificently-dressed ladies near the door.

"The ——," said several more, straining on tiptoe to get a peep of her ; and again I was unable to do homage

to the chaste Diana, from the terrible impression made on me by one of her attendant nymphs. What took place it is impossible for me to say. Is it not written in the chronicles of the —— *Gazette*? I knew nothing about it. Again one image filled my mind, though a dozen must have been reflected upon the retina of my eye.

When the murmurs of admiration had subsided, I ventured to ask my friend for information as to my divinity.

“She is Lady Margaret Gawaine, daughter of the Duke of Portobello, and one of the ladies-in-waiting to ——, &c. &c. &c. Engaged to be married to Viscount Spindle, son of ——”

I heard no more, but made my way at once to the stable-yard, whither the whole of the company was beginning to turn.

I was unfortunate enough to find my own horse, which was remarkable in my present state of distraction; and we found also a most accommodating fox, positively in the laurels of the garden, who allowed himself to be killed under the very wheels of the ——’s carriage, after giving us a very short and circuitous run. My own enjoyment of this part of the day may be told in few words. As soon as I found myself clear of the garden, I selected my place irrespective of the hounds, parallel with the carriage, which contained the betrothed of that conceited beast, Spindle (that’s the language in which I thought of him that morning). I could not take my eyes from her as she rode along by the side of the field. I was brought to my senses by tumbling head over heels at the first fence,

my horse not attempting the ordinary manœuvre for negotiating that obstacle. What cared I? Was I not glad? Would it not be a pleasure for her to see me die? But not having killed myself I went on again; and at the very next place the same thing happened as before. I was not even stunned. Would that I had been! The hated Spindle was on horseback, with a hog-backed stile in front of him. He did it—well! he certainly did it in that remarkably easy manner which the English gentleman assumes when he knows himself to be “all there.” And why should not I do it? Alas! it is not to every man to reach Corinth. At that moment the carriage, containing all that Spindle and I together held dear, appeared in sight. I gave one look of intense reproach—Heaven knows why!—at the Lady Margaret Gawaine, and fell on the top of my head, eventually settling on the flat of my back, into the next field. I didn’t get up again so quickly as I might have done, and the carriages rolled on, I believe. I found myself, on waking, in the arms of a good-natured groom, who, by his master’s order, was pouring brandy down my throat. I was not long in recovering; but the carriages, the horses, the fox, the hounds, and that beautiful vision, were all gone on their way rejoicing.

“I suppose that pony aint your own, Sir?” said the good-natured groom, with a curious twinkle when he saw I was better.

“No—that is, not altogether”—still confused with the champagne or the tumble.

“Ah! they ought to ha’ told you, Sir. Why, he’s stone-blind!”

And so he was : so that, physically and mentally, we must have been a neat pair to go hunting. Knackerton need not have been so particular about his horse, though he said a good deal on his merits when we got back.

The next morning my sick-leave was up. The "æger" had expended itself : but as I had still a headache, and a general sense of pain in every limb, it was not surprising that Mrs. Trimmer should have suggested another day's rest and a little more mixture. I declined them both. Having been partially cured of my chronic attack by the very violence of the remedy, I determined to wait patiently for any further opportunities of seeing Lady Margaret, trusting to the chapter of accidents to remove the hated Spindle, and put me in his place. Bob Carew was delighted with the success of the experiment, and was *matériel* enough to regard the whole as so much gain, excepting the tumbles. My lacerated feelings went for nothing.

I had settled down comfortably into a state of spooneyism, occasionally talking to Bob about "dear Gazelles," and "blighted hopes," "Medora," "Lara," and secretly determining to haunt Grosvenor Square whenever I got to London, when the prepositor for the week presented himself at our study, and requested my company to the doctor. I was not long in ascertaining the cause of this invitation. Undeniable authority had informed Dr. Trimmer of the intrusion of one of his boys upon the late solemn and momentous occasion. It was not difficult to spot the culprit, though Goose was true and Cording unassailable. I was compelled to admit the soft impeachment. "I was Delia:" and, as if the Fates had con-

spired to cure me of a juvenile folly, I was first lectured upon the heinous offence of presenting myself before so much that was great and good and beautiful, and then flogged as a sort of counter-irritant to that laceration of the heart from which I had already suffered so severely.

I have seen Lady Margaret since : many times, I may say. I only haunted Grosvenor Square one vacation, that is, till I was sixteen. I feel great admiration for that estimable lady even now. She bears the remains—I hope this is not impertinent, considering our time of life—of her former beauty. But I have learned to look at Spindle with no feeling of animosity. Indeed I married and settled rather early in life : and as it is quite out of the question that I could have married her, I have something for which to thank a flogging.





THE MAN WHO LIVED BY HIS WITS.

LIVES by his wits ! That's a very extraordinary expression : and considering the amount of wits, and the many necessities of life to be got by them, requires close and careful analysis. Whether a man may be said to live by his own wits, rather than by the absence of them in other people, admits of doubt ; though, to be sure, as an one-eyed man is a king among blind ones, so some credit must be given to the man who lives at all amongst his fellow creatures. Neither is it an easy matter, after all, to come by more than one's own in such a jostling, pushing, unscrupulous world, as this has become since the Reform Bill of '32 ; a period when this much admired Constitution was supposed to have reached the very zenith of perfection, and to have been secured from any further tinkering, until the Greek Calends at least.

Perhaps that celebrated movement did really sharpen men's intellects ; for since that time there has been a struggle, and a pace, wholly unprecedented. Bubble railways and companies, limited liabilities of unlimited assurance, mines, aqueducts, tunnels, building and drain-

age societies, reclamation of common land and common sewage, and hundreds of other things afloat, besides the British navy, which require a certain amount of activity and brains, unknown, save in exceptional cases, when George IV was king. What have become of the idlers, the dandies, of that period? Do they exist, or hide themselves in rocks and caves? Be well assured they would now be trodden down and killed if they ventured to show themselves in the crowd of hungry Greeks, whose subtle and accommodating intellects pervade society west, as well as east, of Temple Bar. What would Brummell have looked like as the chairman of a gigantic hotel company, promising its ten per cent. to some *roué* nobleman, or brother officer of the Tenth Hussars! How would they have bartered their scrip, and apportioned the shares, and put first an eighth and then an additional sixteenth into their pockets, as the price of their honourable names and services! I tell you, if those men had lived now, they would have had no more chance of living by their wits, than the old Exeter Tally-ho would have of beating the express train with its team.

There's so much difference between greatness and goodness, that I hardly know whether to live by one's wits is a complimentary explanation of one's career. I rather think not; and yet it ought to be. What more honourable occupation can a man find for his intelligence than that of providing bread and butter for himself? There are so many ways of doing it—not all equally proper. But as all are seized upon by somebody, it behoves the starveling to take that which comes to hand—and some have a talent for one thing, some for another;

but I don't think much of a talent for starving in a land where everybody is helping himself.

Men who live by their wits are not such as have a great turn for legitimate business. I do not know that it implies even honesty; certainly not perseverance and respectability. It is not consistent with Exeter Hall, at *first sight*, though some of those gentlemen do pretty well in that way; nor drab shorts, except as far as muffins and a cold shoulder are concerned. The man who sweeps a crossing has nothing to do with it, nor our bishops, colonial or otherwise. A policeman and a parish beadle are equally removed from it, and all who have a certain but limited income from Government or Consols. The censure, if any be conveyed, includes all who have no ostensible means of livelihood at all, and many men who have half a dozen methods of making both ends meet. It eminently embraces the waifs and strays of the Turf, the only book analogous to such wit being a betting-book. Hangers on of great houses are indebted for the luxuries of life to their brains; and it is a mutual compliment to believe that they are appreciated. Some men pass through life very comfortably upon the only inheritance of which their parents have been unable to deprive them; and not unfrequently finish by landing themselves in a haven which, at the outset of their career, must have been but a remote chance.

My old acquaintance, Dick Whistler, was one of these. Of all the slippery dogs it was my luck to meet upon the ice this winter, Dick was the most so. There was nothing downright bad about him; but he was one of those mysterious beings that nobody knows anything about,

but whom everybody knows. He had been so ever since my first acquaintance with him, and as that was in our schoolboy days, it's needless to say that that is some time ago. The way I renewed my acquaintance with him, after some little absence, was curious in itself. I was skating along, in a plain straightforward way, thinking of something, or nothing, *et totus in illis*, when I came suddenly in contact with a gentleman doing the spread eagle to an admiring crowd of ladies. Down he went, and as I stopped to apologise and assist the man in rising, I saw it was my old friend, Mr. Whistler. The place in which it happened was semi-private, and I verily believe Dick knew not a soul on the spot excepting myself; notwithstanding which, he had evidently skated himself into the good graces of the women, and, as a matter of popularity, was already well ahead of the oldest inhabitant. It was quite his way.

"What in the world brought you here, my dear fellow?" said I, raising him from the ground, and assisting him to brush off the snow; "you are not staying in the house, are you?"

"Staying in the house!—oh, dear no—is there a house? I came down for half an hour's skating, because Herbert Beauchamp told me what good ice it was. And so it is, capital." And here the speaker commenced some more evolutions, with a certain air of self-possession, and the possession of everything else within his survey.

"And what are you doing, Dick?" said I, returning to the charge.

"I'm trying to do the outside edge backw——"

"No, no, I don't mean that ; I mean how are you getting on ?"

"Oh, capitally ; I'm all right. Living by my wits, since I saw you in the spring." I jumped at once to a conclusion, though it proved to be the wrong one, east of Temple Bar.

"Now what should you say was a good investment ? Mexican Bonds, or Canada Trunks ?—any chance of a rise in these last ?" and here I pulled up and spoke rather seriously. "I want to invest five or six hundred pounds, and I dare say you know all about it."

"No, indeed I don't. What in the world are Canada Trunks ? not hair trunks—or breeches made of buffalo hides——" By this time, of course, I saw that his wits had not led him to the Stock Exchange. There was but one other course he could have gone, and I thought I might profit by it to the extent of a sovereign or two.

"What should you recommend for a long shot at the Derby now ? I only put on a sovereign or two ; so I must have your twenty or five and twenty to one, you see. It's no use backing a favourite at seven or eight to one ;" and I looked mysterious.

"You're quite right," replied he ; and I made sure I had hit upon his new occupation. "I should say Marksman, if I were you. You'll get about twenty-five to one, and be sure to have a run for your money, if the horse is all right. Besides, it's better to stand a bit of temper, than a rank bad 'un." Right this time, thought I, at all events.

"And so you find it answer pretty well, do you ?" en-

quired I, after a pause ; “ the associations are not pleasant, that’s the worst of it.”

“ How do you mean ? ” said he, evidently all abroad.

“ I mean the associations of the turf are not pleasant, though I dare say there’s good business to be done there. I understood you to say you had been living on it lately.”

“ I—living on the turf? No, not exactly, my good fellow. I’ve been writing for the magazines ; and though I do the racing article for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, I can hardly be said to have gone upon the turf.”

“ Well, certainly not,” said I, considerably relieved, though somewhat surprised ; for I should have called his occupation anything but living on his wits, to judge by his productions.

I said that Dick Whistler was an acquaintance of long standing—so he is ; and one of those men whose success in life is worth a study, if only as a curiosity. It can hardly be recommended as a model for imitation. As a boy at school he always lived by his wits, so to speak ; that is, without any of the externals of other boys he was always on a par with them. In the matter of clothes, parents, parcels, and exercises, there seemed to be about Dick a great family insolvency. Nobody came to see him, nobody gave him tips, nobody sent him hampers ; but he managed to have friends, money, and pudding. He was most essentially good humoured, and endowed with a tact which never made him an enemy. I think he tried to write verses, in order that he might do other boys’ exercises, but *poeta nascitur non fit*, so he got his own done, and apologised. He had even then a talent

for being among the "big fellows," and the habit has stuck to him through life.

I heard of Dick Whistler at Cambridge. I don't know how he got there, or who sent him there. I never saw anybody who did know. He had no scholarship, nor Fellowship, nor anything else, excepting friendship, to keep him afloat. He worked that ship, copper-bottomed A 1, pretty well. He took care to be seen always with good men; and although those were the days of rollicking, drinking, fox-hunting undergraduates, who left copes, and stoles, and chasubles, and fancy vestments to their betters, Dick Whistler left the university with a creditable *testamur*, and not overburthened with debt. This part of his career did him great credit, and paid in the long run remarkably well. His wits were not wool-gathering then.

When he came to London, hard work ought to have been his portion. It was all he had. So he took chambers in the Temple, as a near approach to learning. He was next thing to a clever fellow, to more clever fellows than one. An embryo chancellor was on his staircase, and the future Master of the Rolls lived opposite to him. As to Dick, he was to be seen any day on some good-looking hack, not his own, capering or soberly walking in the park, according to circumstances. He accommodated himself, too, to the club gridiron and a pint of stout, or to a French *menu* and Moët's very fine dry, with the same good humour. He never was without the one or the other, and he tried to look as if he didn't care which, and almost succeeded. He had grown up into rather a good-looking man, of

easy, if not polished manners ; and he knew his company, and how to treat it collectively and individually. Whatever he had, went for pocket money and personal expenses. In these he never affected great luxury ; and if he had two hundred a year, he made them do the duty of six, at the very least. He was well received by the swells, whom he knew ; and he made an excellent living at this time out of his wits.

“ I don’t think you ever hunt, Whistler ? ” said my friend, Tom Brampston, to him, as he was strolling up St. James’s Street one fine October afternoon.

“ No, I don’t, Tom,” replied he : “ can’t afford it.”

“ Money well laid out in your case. I’m sure Woodcraft would ask you down, if you did ; only he doesn’t know what to do with men who don’t ride in the winter.” So Dick meditated on these things, and thought he might as well visit Lord Woodcraft twice in the year as once. Dick did not know much about hunting, but thought he could do as other people, in which he was not far wrong. He left his dress to his tailor, and his horseflesh to the dealer, in whom he implicitly trusted. He tried a couple of good screws, and carried them into the borders of Lord Woodcraft’s hunt.

“ What sort of quarters have you got, Whistler, at Noman’s Land ; do they do you pretty well ? ” enquired my lord.

“ The cookery is not quite equal to the *Trois Frères*,” said Dick.

“ No ; I should think not. It’s a pure British public ; nothing more. You’ve got your own claret down, I suppose ? ”

"Well—no. I didn't intend to indulge in luxuries ; but I must send up to town——"

"I'll tell you what you'd better do—come to me for a month."

"That's very good of you ; but where shall I find stabling ?" Dick had heard Woodcraft say a hundred times that he never took in dealers' horses.

"Stabling—oh ! we've plenty of horses. Send these devils back to town. We shall hunt at Woodmanscroft on Tuesday, and you can come on afterwards." I need not say that Dick Whistler never missed his month afterwards, and hired no more horses.

It was only three or four days after our meeting that the frost broke. It broke very unexpectedly on Saturday afternoon, and notwithstanding its severity, the snow had kept the earth warm, and there was hunting on the Monday or Tuesday in most places. When skates were not available, leather breeches were ; so Dick changed the *venue* from the Regent's Park or Serpentine to Woodmanscroft ; for it was a principle of his not to live longer or more on club dinners, and the joint, than was absolutely necessary, though he never shrunk from the conditions of his career. I have no doubt many a man is better off upon honestly gained bread and cheese ; but then he can hardly be said to be living by his wits, however laborious the occupation. The beauty of Dick's livelihood was, that there was no labour in it, and that it was as far removed from a bare existence, as clear turtle and *Ponch à la romaine* is from red-herrings and beer. Under these circumstances, and having laid down a principle to act by, after due deliberation he was quite

right to look for fresh quarters, where he knew they would be found. I record, to his shame, that he cared nothing whatever about hunting. He had certain instincts of sport about him like the wild Indian, it is true ; but they extended no further than self-preservation. Hunting a fox, of all uneatable and unpoetical things in the world, was not *per se* to Dick's taste. It was accompanied with some danger and much inconvenience. But then the sport was as essential to Dick's wants just now as hunting the moose or buffalo is to the wants of the wild Indian. It was his object to be at Woodmanscroft, and he kept his object in view as steadily as the Indian did his dinner, and with as little idea of being turned aside from it.

And this object now had got beyond the mere pleasures of a good dinner or society, and had licked itself into a tangible shape. Dick Whistler had determined upon marrying an heiress ; an heiress of good appearance and high family, who happened at the present time to be one of Lord Woodcraft's distinguished guests.

Lady Dorothy Peacham was the only surviving daughter of the late Lord Blossomville, and had forty thousand pounds of her own. She was a good-looking woman of eight-and-thirty, at a liberal calculation ; and the only wonder is, that none of the penniless Foreign Office clerks, or mediæval majors of her own rank in life, had carried her off long before. However, there she was ; and when Dick Whistler reached his noble host's hospitable roof, Lady Dorothy was very far from the least important person under it.

They did some hunting on Wednesday and Thursday.

Dick got a fall from a not very tractable young 'un to which my lord's groom had treated him for first horse ; and Lord Swansdown was nearly drowned in the river, which had overflowed its banks. Lady Dorothy did not hunt, but Cicely Prevôt, the baronet's daughter, did ; and engaged the attention of Major Thrustham, of the Guards, to his intense disgust, who lost the best twenty minutes of the season in shortening the lady's stirrup.

"It really looks as if the frost was gone," said his lordship, coming home on the Thursday evening in a warm fog, with a south-westerly breeze ; "what do you think, Swansdown ?"

"Devilish cold," said Lord Swansdown : "anyhow, I'm shivering."

"Oh, you've been in the water ; no wonder you feel cold ; but look at the sky." So they all looked at the sky, which gave a cheerful promise of a fall on the morrow. "I wish it mayn't be snow," said Dick, than which, however, he desired nothing more earnestly.

Fortune favours those who live by their wits, and in the present case she did so pre-eminently. She postponed the pleasures of at least a dozen people in one house, and thousands in other houses, to make an opportunity for a —— well—a fortune-hunter, which may account for the preference. The impossibility of making love in a six-days-a-week country is obvious. The morning absorbs an elaborate toilet, a hurried breakfast, much comforter and pea-jacket preparation, and a drive. The afternoon, if you return soon enough, baths, slippers, a dressing-room fire, letters to answer, and a less elaborate but equally-needed toilet. Dinner, absorption of viands

and conversation : and who was Dick Whistler that he should expect to take in Lady Dorothy Peacham, while Plantagenets of the Foreign Office, and Tudors of the Household Brigade, were there before him? He envied them their opportunities, and despised their apathy.

As he lay in bed on the Friday morning he was cursing the thaw, and looking at his boots with a savage animosity, when the servant appointed to look after his welfare knocked at his door, and opened his shutters.

"I should like those brown tops of mine, if you please, and mind the shaving-water boils."

"Certainly, Sir ; but I don't think there'll be any hunting to-day."

"No hunting?" enquired Mr. Whistler, sitting bolt upright in bed, and running his fingers through his dishevelled locks. "No hunting? Why not?"

"'Cos it's froze hard all night, and don't seem like giving. My lord's man says he'll wait till eleven, and then beat a couple of outlying covers, if the gentlemen would like to shoot;" and away went the mercurial valet to tell the same tale to his next master.

True enough, it was a hard frost ; and as by eleven o'clock it had not begun to give, nor for twelve days after, the men who chose to stop buckled on their gaiters and thick boots, borrowing my lord's guns and my lord's loaders, and had a very pretty battue in an outlying cover—a battue almost good enough to have elicited the abuse of the sporting writers, who go in for the bob-tailed pointer and the stubble-field, to the extermination of the barn-door fowl and Leadenhall Market system, and to the

glorification of "real sport, Sir, and healthful exercise." How little they know of the business !

The frost continued, and some men went to shoot their own covers, some the covers of other people. Dick sent for his skates, by Lord Woodcraft's desire, and so did one or two more. The ladies were already provided, and it was quite clear that Dick's chance was better at torchlike pic-nics and luncheons on the lake than it had been hitherto. Still Lady Dorothy did not thaw much ; and she was a lady well calculated to hold her own, unless she meant to relinquish it voluntarily.

Lady Woodcraft was a cheerful woman, and having still a detrimental or two from the Household Brigade, with Miss Cecily Prevôt, left behind, was bent upon doing something to amuse her friends ; so she organised a tent on the lake, with flambeaux and torchlight procession, to come off when the safety of herself and her followers would be assured by the thickness of the ice. The tenants were to be there, and all the inhabitants of the neighbourhood who liked to come ; and there were to be cakes and tea, and wine and cherry brandy, and as much strong beer as Hodge could dispose of to his satisfaction.

And in a week's time it did come off : it was just the sort of winter for a thing of the kind to come off—what people call "old-fashioned." I hope they'll remain so, or, better still, go out altogether. Their severity is, however, relieved by an exceptional loveliness, as on the night in question, when Lady Woodcraft, and Lady Dorothy Peacham, and Cicely Prevôt made their way to the lake, with Lord Woodcraft, Major Thrustham, and half-a-dozen Guardsmen and country-house idlers, the

busiest of whom was Dick Whistler ; for it was he who arranged—what nobody else would arrange—the quadrille, the tent, the bonfire, the procession, and the chorus of school-children and choristers ; and, considering he was a nobody, he really got as much attention and obedience as could be expected. Nobody knows how hard it is for a nobody to make himself somebody among the somebodies. He would have had a charade, but that was a plunge even beyond Dick's impudence, and he left it to somebody, who thought it too cold. However, there were the lovely trees, extending round two-thirds of the lake to the very edge of the water, with their myriads of silver-frosted twigs, glistening (for there had been no wind in the late frost), like nature's fretted Gothic, against the clear sky. Here and there the fir-trees bent their branches to the ice, weighted with the undisturbed snow, and the icicles hung pendant from the picturesque old boat-house nearly in the form and size of stalactites. All was lit up by the blaze of pine-wood torches ; and if the furs and bright-coloured ribbons and velvets of the ladies of the house threw a warm and cheerful glow over the lake, as they glided smoothly along on their skates, the farmers' daughters and the peasant girls, with their bright red petticoats, helped the animation of the scene, as they spread themselves about in groups with their companions. The sharp night air was cut by their cheerful voices, and the business of the scene and the warmth of the welcome had obliterated the recollection that there were ten degrees of frost in the air.

“In the midst of life—” no, rather let me say, “No man, fortunately, knows how closely allied are our hap-

piest moments to great calamity ;” few even suspect it. Cows must be watered, even in a frost, and to the detriment of good ice ; and for this purpose, on the further side of the lake, and in one of its most beautiful spots, overhung by the crystallised trees, it had been found necessary to break the ice for some little distance round. Many of the skaters had gone home : some were preparing for a start even now ; most of those from the “big house” were trudging up the steep hill which led to the garden-gate and terrace which looked down upon the lake. Two or three of the men still remained, and with them Dick Whistler. Lady Dorothy, devoted to skating, was oblivious of Lady Woodcraft, and was prolonging her enjoyment. They were under the trees still, near the watering-place, and ignorant (especially by torchlight) of the danger at hand. A few spectators were there, watching Lady Dorothy, and Mr. Whistler, who was doing his best. At once, without a moment’s notice, the ice broke, and Lady Dorothy fell in. Such an accident, at night, even by torchlight, is calculated to arouse alarm. The extent of the danger was unknown, and the yokels held back from fear ; the Guardsmen were not much better ; they came rushing to the spot, but beyond calling to Lady Dorothy, they did little for her preservation. Dick Whistler was more at home, and, really anxious to be of service to the lady, proceeded more systematically. It was a moment for action, not poetry.

“Take hold of that :” said Dick, extending his stick with one hand, and holding a torch with the other. “Now then, Lady Dorothy, try to reach it !” and he leant over still more, The lady’s clothes held her on the

surface for a moment ; but they were becoming saturated, and she exhausted. She made a violent effort, however, and caught the stick. But Dick Whistler had neglected to take hold of any one for support, and the sudden jerk broke the edge of the ice on which he stood, and pulled him in.

At that moment one of the farm servants caught sight of a fir-pole of considerable length, lying on the bank of the lake. Without much difficulty it was launched, and, laid across the hole, sustained their weight on either side. The Guardsmen assisted manfully : Dick supported Lady Dorothy in his arms, who had fainted ; and the two were drawn from the water, just as the lady had ceased to murmur her thanks to Dick, and her prognostications of her own inevitable fate.

From that evening matters progressed more satisfactorily ; and in a few days there was a thaw, physical and metaphysical.

“ Well, Whistler, there’ll be hunting to-morrow, and I’ve ordered the Duffer and Soft-sawder to be sent on for you. We shall have to start pretty early—breakfast at eight-fifteen, sharp.”

“ Thank you, my lord, I must go to-morrow morning ; my time is up, and I’ve something to do in town that must be done.”

“ Oh ! impossible ; everything gives way to hunting after such a frost as we’ve had lately.

“ Everything excepting the publishers. Business is business——” but just then Dick, I suppose, caught sight of Lady Dorothy, and as the swells were nearly all gone, and she had thawed as well as the weather, he hesitated

so far as to ask whether he could get away by the night-train.

“Well, you can if you choose ; but it seems absurd to leave a good dinner for a cold and comfortless railway carriage. Won’t the next morning do as well? At all events, the horses can go on, and you can settle about it to-morrow. If you like to stop, there’s plenty of room, and lots of horses just now, as you see.”

And somehow or other Dick Whistler did stop, after a consultation with Lady Dorothy in the library ; and Mr. Brevier, the publisher, went nearly out of his mind writing after those clever sketches of the aristocracy, which had been promised for the *Piccadilly Monthly*. What made it worse was, that he got neither the sketches nor an answer ; conduct of course unpardonable in a man who lived by his wits. In three weeks more he threw up all his engagements with the press, which has been a great comfort to many of his readers ; and has announced to his friends and the public, through the *Court Journal*, that he is about to be married to the amiable and accomplished daughter of the late Lord Blossomville. Lady Dorothy herself—with forty thousand pounds—need not have despaired, even at eight-and-thirty ; but she knew her people best, and had become very suspicious of the motives of her order. Major Thrustham and his young friends were capital fellows, and worthy of the names they bore : but if Dick Whistler did live by his wits, at any rate he pulled her out of the water.



NED LOXLEY'S FIRST SERMON.

“**A** FAMILY LIVING,” much as we are indebted to it for keeping a very useful and remarkably gentlemanly class of pastors in the elastic ring-fence known as the National Church, has always appeared to me a curious phase of hereditary proprietorship. I can well understand the natural propriety of bequeathing to one’s posterity Consols, land, debentures (if anyone would like to have them), Drury Lane shares, ancestors in armour of any century you can meet with at a fair price, a business in the ham and cheese line, ones’ interest in a solicitor’s office, a crossing, a baked potato-can with its especial corner, or any other lucrative and gentlemanly occupation, by which you have been accustomed to “hold your own.” But as I never saw a general officer, who was born so, except perhaps a P——e of distinguished foreign blood—as I never heard of an hereditary primo-tenore, or the reversion of a bishopric, and as I am a profound unbeliever in hereditary brains or statesmanship—which latter is, however unsuccessfully, attempted to be foisted upon the vote-desiring public—I cannot, of course, understand an

hereditary capacity for taking care of our neighbours' souls. It is perfectly true that this curious property does not involve the absolute necessity of putting a son or a nephew into the business : but practically it ends in that, unless it begins by being sold to the highest bidder for a term of years, until some one turns up, sufficiently dear to us, or sufficiently qualified, to take possession of the property. If a man has a farm, and his son doesn't like turnip-tops, he lets it ; if a man has a stool in a mercantile or banking house, and his son can't be instructed in the rule of three, or the use of vulgar fractions, he looks for some other employment ; but if he has "a family living" he does not seek to know how well fitted one of his sons may be for its occupation, but he enquires within himself which is the one whose claims are the greatest upon that particular source of income, and young Master Tom is, from that day forward, regarded as the future incumbent.

I am told that we have to thank Henry VIII. and one Thomas Cromwell, the Lord Keeper, who nevertheless lost his own head, for this curious anomaly. Anomaly, indeed, it can hardly be called ; for what the New Public School Primer ought to call its "inseparable accidents" are distinctly stated and rigidly adhered to. It is "a family living" most unmistakably. It is a living for one of the family, and at one time divided a celebrated distinction with the navy—a distinction which that service has a right to abjure—of engrossing the fool of the family. Whether or not the celebrated line, not in the Public School Primer, *As in præsentī perfectum format in avi*, has anything to do with the assumption or not, I cannot say, but it has been translated in the following

manner ; "Though he's an ass at present, he'll be perfect in the navy"—I need hardly say improperly.

Allowing, then, for the sake of argument, that the distinction does or did belong to the Church (for I am writing of a time gone by), it would be worth while to consider how far the preparation for the business was conducted upon approved principles. *Poeta nascitur non fit* ; and, therefore, Mr. Tennyson has his right made out beforehand. *Ecclesiasticus fit non nascitur* ; therefore it behoves the possessor of "the family living" to fit the boy to the clothes which it is determined he shall wear. Before we get to Ned Loxley's first sermon, we have therefore to take a bird's-eye view of his preparation for preaching it.

Everybody is prepared to understand that Eton or Harrow, or some great public school—this was before Marlborough and Cheltenham—gave the earliest taste and inclination for the family living in store for Master Edward. The great seminary at which he passed his early days was not slow to flog nor quick to teach ; but he came away from it quite satisfied with its discipline, and knowing as much as he could possibly be expected to know. He was not at all of the same mind as one of our well-known *littérateurs*, who talks loftily of running a dagger into the master who should have dared to invade his sacred person with the birch or the cane, and who, consequently, makes an ass of himself whenever he wanders out of his own rather entertaining meshes of semi-foreign affectation. Not so our Ned ; he had no objection to the floggings, but bore them like his ancestors before him, and, like them, made as little of the oppor-

tunities as had been offered him for doing anything beyond rat-hunting, badger-baiting, making gin punch and Everton toffy, and grilling mutton chops without the help of a gridiron or a toasting fork, or any mortal utensil but a study-shovel.

Of course Ned's father, the possessor of the family living in question, had his own ideas as to how his second son should be made to fit his clothes. Old Squire Loxley said, "above all things that he must be a gentleman. That it was all very well for people to talk about our universities making gentlemen; they did nothing of the sort." And he was quite right. There were no end of sets then. But that if Ned was to go to Oxford, he must get into a good set. His good set was easily comprehensible by his son; and, from his early education, just the set he was likely to get into. They were gentlemen, every man of them—but rather fast gentlemen; who stood at the corner of Oriel Lane, when they were not out hunting or with the drag, or driving a team to Bicester, and despised others. They gave good supper parties in college, and had a decided partiality for grilled bones. They were members of the Phoenix or Bullingdon Clubs more or less, especially the latter; and, though not given to violent exercise on all occasions, were to be met with at the Quentin. Some indulged in tennis, and most of them in limited debt. They were mild in their manners and costume, and never made rows in quad. Without being utterly reprobate, they were fast as most men with an eye to the steeple. But old Squire Loxley said Ned was to be a gentleman at all events, and that was a gentleman in Ned's day.

It is not so easy to define what a gentleman may be now who is fitting himself for "the family living." I am inclined to think that he wears scarlet or blue neckcloths, curious hats, French pockets, and velvet coats; perhaps even knickerbockers. I'm told that he doesn't hunt, but that he runs races himself, jumps hurdles, pulls in the boat, and goes in for an inexplicable thing called muscular Christianity; Christianity of any sort being better than none. He does not attend steeplechases (at Cambridge certainly not at present), and is altogether slower, and not so good a specimen old Loxley would say, as might have been met with in the days of Ridley Colborne, or Dick Howard. It is but fair by Mrs. Loxley to state that her views of the occupant of the family living were that he should play a good rubber and be able to carve.

Now, let us look at Ned Loxley himself, and see the effect which those particular *soins* had produced in him. He was physically what is commonly called a very good-looking fellow. He was tall, of a good figure, fair and pleasant to look at generally. Perfectly gentlemanly in his manners, and in all his appointments. He was accomplished, in his way. A capital horseman and good shot, and fully impressed with the idea that such things should be done well or not at all. He was a pretty good draughtsman, and a fair musician, with one of those musical voices in speaking and singing to which it was a true pleasure to listen. He was wonderfully free from active vice, and, though he delighted in society, and was always ready to assist at any *r union* that promised sport or pleasure, it was in that unpretending manner which escaped prominent observation. He was sin-

gularly averse to the reputation of a fast man, and his own friends and his father pronounced him the very thing for "the family living." The tenants and rustics enjoyed the prospects of "sitting under" so pleasant a gentleman; and the old ladies of the neighbourhood, who had not yet been led astray by tonsures, hollow cheeks, mediæval vestments, and Noah's Ark coats, prognosticated great things of the future incumbent of Lockington.

Mentally, Ned had his misgivings. He was an honest, upright, good fellow, because he had been taught that all gentlemen were expected to be so. As to any particular principle of action, never having heard that it was a part of the character he was about to assume, he had none. I think, if he had been anybody but Ned Loxley, he would have found courage enough to say that he would scarcely be the right man in the right place. He had his misgivings about the free-and-easy life he had always led, and was intending to lead. He had a relish for good dry port, and was always told that every rector of Lockington had it before him. He saw no harm in two or three days a week with the foxhounds, as long as it was in a black coat and a very stiff white neckcloth; and he meant to be in that place to which all parsons of his calibre aspire, well to the fore. But he had his qualms at times, and was not quite certain that these were not pursuits rather lay than clerical, after all. Still, what was he to do? There was "the family living" beckoning him on, and a Loxley had never yet been known to turn his back on it. Could he anger his father, perhaps seriously inconvenience him,

and disappoint his mother, who fully expected him to occupy the rectory house, and had brought him into the world for no earthly purpose besides? As to Constance Trefoil, Sir Richard's daughter, she already had been taught to consider the rectory her future home.

I know this all was wrong : and no doubt if old Loxley and his wife, and Constance, who is still a remarkably good-looking woman, had been able to look at the question with the eyes of eighteen hundred and sixty-seven, as well as Ned Loxley himself, the thing would have been totally different. If we, however, demand some indulgence for the infirmities of our age, we ought not to be hard in granting them to those who have not had the advantage of our cultivation. However, before proceeding, let me set the minds of my readers at ease by saying that Ned made a most excellent parish priest for many years, and is now as High-church and as gorgeously apparelled as his diocesan desires.

There were two narrow portals to this family living, through which, after taking his degree, it was necessary for Ned to pass in getting into the living of Lockington. The first of these was his first sermon, the second was his curacy. We have nothing to do with the second, though I may be inclined to give a sketch of it for the benefit of all young clergymen at some future time. We at present must occupy ourselves with the first.

Of course we must suppose the dangerous shoals of college testimonials and ordination to be passed in security. The excellent bishop, who received a written certificate of Ned's excellent conduct at Christ Church, and the satisfactory acknowledgment of the university ex-

aminers as to his knowledge of classics, logic, divinity, the Thirty-Nine Articles inclusive, of the orthodoxy of which many doubts seem to have arisen in future times, did him the favour of ordaining him to the care of eight thousand souls, seven thousand of whom were paupers, at a stipend of twenty-seven pounds ten. This was in consideration of Ned's private means and the vicar's well-known poverty, who, being incapable of work or pay, was glad to give a title for orders to those who wanted more of the latter, and were willing to give as much as possible of the former. There was a story current that Ned won the bishop's heart at dinner by the promptness with which he replied to his enquiry as to the purity of a certain bottle of port wine.

"How do you find that wine, Mr. Softly?" said his lordship.

"Excellent, most excellent, my lord," said Softly, as he was bound to say, and so said Hardy, and Threadbare, and Taylor, and Smith, and Jones, and Robinson.

"Then do me the favour to pass the bottle," which was getting empty. "Mr. Loxley, you don't take any wine. How do you find that wine?"

"I find it corked, my lord; but I beg——"

"It is corked, Sir; and if you do not mind the trouble of ringing, as you are near the bell, we'll have another bottle." And the bishop henceforth made no opposition to Mr. Loxley's wishes to receive only twenty-seven pounds ten a year.

I don't believe a word of it, for two reasons. I know Ned Loxley was much too modest to have said it, and the bishop, I know, always drank claret. I rather attri-

bute the favour which Ned Loxley undoubtedly enjoyed with his diocesan to another circumstance.

There were in the university at that time two professors of divinity. The university had selected one, and the government another ; and both having the right to do so, and both being honourably excited to the support of their nominations by the welfare of the undergraduates, there they both stuck. There were no end of lectures from them both, and the only sufferers were the undergraduates, some of whom went to one, some to the other, and a happy but select few to neither. Ned Loxley went to both, and left his card on the hall table of each, entering his name in a book with the purpose of selecting one of the two. He heard one lecture from each ; but whether from a fear of trespassing upon their time or his own (which is more probable), he went no more. His surprise was great at the end of the term to receive a Testamur from each, with which he presented the bishop, among his other papers.

In the matter of port wine, I have just now mentioned my belief in his modesty. It extended beyond the social question of wine to the public necessity of duty. When a man is once ordained, as it is especially to preach, it seems requisite that he should set about it ; and knowing that he would have future opportunities of doing good in his own curacy of Stockingfield among the weavers for at least a couple of years before his promotion to "the family living," he sought an opportunity of doing good by stealth in a small, very small parish church, not far from my house. I was so fortunate as to hear that first effort ; and though the sermon itself produced only an effect,

which I regret to say has vanished with the effect of many more, the circumstances attending it cling to me still.

The clergy in that part of Gorsehamptonshire are the most accommodating people in the world. It was not one pulpit, but twenty, that Ned Loxley could have had for his first sermon, and most of them were liberal enough to offer him the reading-desk too ; in fact, the whole and sole use of the church for the day. One, indeed, went beyond this, and, fearing a novice might be at a loss for a subject, proposed to him to preach a charity sermon for his organist, or the Propagation Society—subjects on which he had himself dilated for the last ten years annually, and on which a new sermon and new preacher might excite fresh interest. That offer was of course declined, and the very smallest of churches was selected by Ned Loxley, as being best adapted for his limited capacity.

The small village of Nestleford lies in the very stickiest part of the Waterford Vale, and within about a quarter of a mile of the celebrated Squash, a brook which is currently supposed to contain more boots, spurs, whips, stirrups, and hunting curiosities than any other brook of the county of Gorsehampton. Not to know that fascinating stream, and not to have been in it or over it when hounds run through that county, is a piece of luck that has happened to few. It is, somehow, always in the way ; and it looks so easy, with its green banks and apparent soundness, to say nothing of its narrowness, that everybody has a turn at the Squash. Alas ! treacherous waters, or rather banks, that rival Overend and Gurney's, or the Agra and Masterman's ! It is as rotten as a limited

liability company, and as difficult to get out of as Canada trunks. Unless it be most judiciously negotiated, and most thoroughly covered, the result is grief. Of the brook and the meadows, however, Ned Loxley knew and cared nothing ; he had to do with the church.

He was quartered four miles from the village of Nestleford, on the opposite side of the brook ; and his hospitable entertainer was his old friend, Peter Flowerdale, one of the best but most eccentric fellows alive. In appearance he was tall, gaunt, and sallow, with a kind, simple, wool-gathering sort of face, and hair which, from carelessness or fancy, was allowed to grow long and straight. He was really married to a most estimable lady, but he was so extremely absent that it seems almost doubtful whether at all times he knew it. His occupations and accomplishments were various, but almost entirely domestic ; and the chief of them was the constant superintendence of his pigs, poultry, and shrubberies. There was nothing he would not have done for anybody in the world, and he was, moreover, a very high authority in everything that concerned scientific horticulture. It was in the house of this estimable but somewhat eccentric gentleman that Ned Loxley was located on the evening before the Sunday on which the village of Nestleford was to be electrified by an eloquence new, if not remarkable.

"Now, Peter, how are we to get to Nestleford to-morrow?" said Ned, at the close of a pleasant Saturday evening, which finished with a cigar.

"Oh ! very easily. I'll lend you the chestnut horse you rode with the hounds the day before yesterday, and I'll ride the bay mare. We can put them up at old

Peastraw's; he's one of the churchwardens, and lives close to the church : the Rectory's a mile off, at least."

"Hadn't we better go on wheels?" asked the other, who was scarcely comfortable at the notion of appearing on his first Sunday in such a rough-and-ready way as suggested by his friend.

"It's two miles farther round ; besides, there's nobody to put up the cart."

"Oh ! as you like," said Ned. "How many miles is it?"

Peter knew very little about mileage, so he answered at random.

"Not above three. I'll show you the short way across the fields ; it's a bridle road, and there's a ford over the brook, opposite the church."

"Don't let us be late, Peter, whatever you do."

"Oh no ! we'll take lots of time. Good-night, Ned." And they parted at the top of the stairs, with no misgivings ; and Ned Loxley spent another half-hour in reading and re-touching his production before he went to bed.

The next day brought a bright but sharp cold morning, with a wind from the north-east—such a morning as brings snow, sometimes unexpectedly. Among other things, Peter Flowerdale was never in time for anything ; he always had a few last directions to give to the keeper or one of the gardeners, and then turned back again to alter them. So that Ned Loxley stood anxiously waiting in the stable-yard long after the time fixed for starting was gone by. As the allowance had been liberal, and the road was over fields, Ned comforted himself while Peter

gave his last orders, and then stood with one foot in the stirrup for another five minutes before starting.

"No—no—well—yes—perhaps it would be as well. No—no—well, I'll tell you what, Parkins, I'll speak to you to-morrow about it." And then they really were off.

That pleasant brisk brightness of a February morning, which looked so very nice through the breakfast-room windows, did not look so well when they got across the turnpike-road, and took the first gate on the left-hand side. The atmosphere darkened in the wind's eye, and the clouds were coming up in their faces with that peculiar look which may turn to hail, but which threatens snow. On they cantered through three or four more hand-gates and along grass fields, until Peter diverged to the right from the top of the hill, and began to cross the grazing grounds diagonally; no longer sticking to the line of white gates, but exhibiting that knowledge of country which belongs usually to broad-skirted shufflers in search of the fox, irrespective of hounds. All this time the snow had been coming down gently, but now it assumed formidable proportions. A very few minutes served to shut out every vestige of track by which they had been guided, and an uncomfortable sameness of colour, or its absence, pervaded earth and sky.

"Hallo, Peter! this gate's locked," said the curate, coming upon a most uncompromising five-barred gate, quite out of all conception as a cold-blooded lark.

"Then we must have gone the wrong way," says Peter.

"But I thought you knew it?"

"So I did in the summer, but I've never been this

way in the snow before." Upon which Ned set off to regain the line, which he found no easy matter.

"What's that place, Peter, down in the valley, about a mile and a half from here?" and Loxley pointed to a village so situated.

"Why, that must be Nestleford itself. This way—I see a gate. What's the time?"

Loxley gave himself the advantage of just five minutes, by telling his friend that it wanted a quarter of an hour, the real time being twenty minutes to eleven.

"Oh! we shall manage it: lots of time," said Peter. "Confound these gates! here's another gate locked. I do believe we've come the wrong way."

"*We!* come, that's rather good," said Ned Loxley; and at that moment the bells in the valley below rung out a loud and cheerful chime, which was borne to the two companions on the wings of the wind, whiter with every increasing flake of snow.

I don't know what may be the state of nervous excitement caused by this music upon an expected curate, but by Loxley's proceedings rather pungent, I should think; for, turning in his saddle, he addressed his friend:

"Now, Peter, you've lost the track, that's very clear. Is that the church down in the vale? because, if it is, I'm dashed if I stop here looking for gates." Saying which, he turned his horse round, and went crash through the weakest part of the fence he could find. Peter Flowerdale was no bruiser over a country, but he was a gentleman, so without much hesitation he went after him.

Down the slope then they blundered, straight for the

valley in which the church-bells were ringing : Ned Loxley first, and Peter following, with a chivalrous feeling hot within him, that it was his business to see his friend through his difficulties. After two more easy fences, comparatively speaking, they entered the large, sixty acre field, now white with snow three inches deep, which led to the line of willows by the brook. Ned Loxley was not long in discovering it.

"Why, Peter, here's water !"

"Water !" replied that gentleman, as if it was either wholly unknown to him, or exceedingly distasteful.

"Water ! where ?"

"Where ? why, right in front of us, to be sure ;" and Ned pointed with his whip.

"So it is—it's the Squash ; I forgot all about it—we ought to have gone a mile higher up to the right, opposite the ford."

"A mile higher up !" gasped Ned : and at that moment out came the chimes again, in loud and unmistakable invitation ; while from where they were, they saw the red-cloaked old women, and the chimney-pot hatted old gentlemen, moving along, to the tune of slow music, towards the church in unusual quantities ; doubtless in honour of the unknown aspirant to ecclesiastical honours.

These terrible sights and sounds, as they came down to the Squash, gave Ned Loxley some very uncomfortable sensations, uppermost of which was the awful apprehension that he should desert his charge, and not only disgrace himself for life, but penalise heavily the unfortunate man who had trusted so far to him that he had left his parishioners for a fortnight to take care of them—

selves—the dead to bury their dead, if there were such, in a very literal sense.

Well, it wanted but five minutes more, and the church-door was in sight, positively in sight, with nothing between hope and the fruition of hope but the waters of the Squash.

“Peter, I must have a cut at it: I can’t stop here, that’s impossible.”

“It’s a nasty place, Ned.”

“How do you know—have you ever been in it?”

“No,” said Peter, with a shudder, and a face whiter and longer than ever.

“Then how can you tell?—I suppose the bottom isn’t wetter than any other, and I’ve been in hundreds. I dare say the chestnut ’ll jump it;” saying which, he drew his horse back, and rode straight at the rottenest and dirtiest of Gorsehamptonshire brooks.

Of course he tumbled in; or rather the chestnut, determined to sustain the character of the Squash, dropped his hind legs on a rotten part of the bank, and slid ignominiously into the water, letting his rider escape by a miracle on to the flat of his back in the newly-fallen snow. Ned Loxley was too good a horseman to let go of the reins, and being on his legs again in a moment, got hold of his head, as the chestnut was about to turn down the stream.

“Here, Peter! quick! tie the mare up to the tree, and come across!” which he did, after considerable difficulty, and by rare exertion. “Now catch hold of my horse (he ought to have said yours) for I must be off;” of which he was reminded by the solemn ringing of what is

sometimes known as the "five minute bell." He was fortunate to reach the vestry door, as the last of his congregation took his seat.

A few minutes served to put the new curate to rights ; and having benefited by the defence of a great-coat, he was only wet through as far as the calves of his legs. It was the last time *he* went to church on horseback.

Having dried himself, partially by lapse of time, partially by the vicinity of an unwholesome flue, and more than either by the natural heat of a nervousness which kept him in a perpetual glow throughout the service, he came in the due course of things to the great ordeal of the day. No prisoner, short of condemnation, perhaps ever felt more uncomfortable in a prison van, than our friend in his circumscribed box, which was encumbered with a heavy sounding-board, the pride of the parish : good hardened offenders, in for only six months, felt happy in comparison. However, the thing must be done ; and even hanging must be gone through, unpleasant as is the process : and, with a tremulous voice, and in tones scarcely audible upon this occasion, Ned Loxley commenced his first sermon.

A dissertation on sermons here might prove valuable. I think I could give some hints as to time, subject, delivery, and language, which might prove valuable to the clergy, if they would but read them. But I feel that this part of my tale would be inevitably cut (or uncut, as the case may be) I forget altogether whether Loxley preached in pure Saxon, which nobody understands, or in Norman French, which has a claim upon two-thirds of the English language for plagiarism ; whether he selected

the style of the judicious Hooker, or the pious Beveridge, the rounded periods of the mellifluous Melville, or the terse thought of Jeremy Taylor. I believe everybody was listening to him, and endeavouring to comprehend something which belonged to "Aristotle's Ethics," and "Butler's Analogy," when he was suddenly taken with a fit of coughing, which threatened to annihilate him on the spot. His cheeks were inflated, his pocket handkerchief, of the whitest cambric, was in full employment at his mouth, his forehead was full of veins, and his eyes distended and fixed, as though he had seen a ghost. And well they might be so. The door had opened with a noiselessness which did credit to its hinges; and at it stood Ned's persevering friend, Peter Flowerdale.

He might have been Venus Anadyomene by the water that poured from him on every side. His hair was dripping; his coat, hat, trousers, and every part of his clothing contributed its quota to the pool which was forming beneath him on the flags of the church floor. As he steadily advanced up the aisle to a convenient spot, it was manifest that he was come to hear the sermon, and had miscalculated his friend's powers of pace. His gaunt appearance and preternaturally solemn face, white enough without the additional cold, with the accompanying shower which continued to drop from him, might have suggested Neptune in the last stage of a decline—that is, to the congregation. What it did represent to Ned Loxley was a still more ridiculous picture: it was Peter floundering about in the Squash in charge of his own horses, and tumbling backwards from the banks until he came to the ford. It was Peter seeking shelter

among the farm-houses and cottages, and saying naughty words about the people for having all gone to church and taken their keys in their pockets with them. It was the power of the keys of which he *hadn't* been preaching. It was Peter, under the doctrine of total immersion: an Anabaptistical Peter, who had been obliged to come into the National Church to prevent himself from dying with cold, while his two horses were tied up somewhere, no better off than their master. Perhaps they were both drowned, and they were going to walk home with a bridle and saddle each on their arm. How many of Peter's ideas were now in the Squash, and how much of his property with them? And when Ned Loxley had got thus far, he was seized with another fit of coughing, and hastily closed his book.

"Poor young man!" said old John Gideon, and Peastraw echoed him; "it was a main fine discourse, and only fourteen minutes; and to think of his being took so nervous, to be sure."

It's astonishing to think how near Ned Loxley was to the truth, all but the drowning, which would have happened but for the timely assistance of a hale young rustic, who had been cutting turnips on the hill side for the cattle. They had all been in the brook, and found out what sort of a bottom it was: as wet as any other brook in the county. Peter had got out by the bank; and both horses, with some difficulty, near the ford.

"And where are the horses, Peter?" said Ned Loxley, while he was warming himself at a red-hot stove.

"Oh! I forget: I hung them up at the church-door."

"What! to dry?" said Ned. "They won't dry there."

"Oh yes, they will : it's quite fine now," replied Peter, shivering.

"Then, why didn't you hang yourself up with them ?"

"Because I thought it right to come to church ;" upon which Ned Loxley again had a choking fit, and replied :

"Then, Peter, the next time, mind you come dry."

"Hardly, Ned," said his pioneer, without moving a muscle of his pale face ; "it is not exactly the place to get anything to drink."





THE HERMIT'S YEAR.

“**HERE'S** your letter, Edith—a very good letter: just such a letter as a young gentleman very much in love might be expected to write. Fine phrases cost very little to young men of average intellect; and I must say for our friend Charlie Courtland, that his have the ring of the true metal about them. It's something to be able to believe what a man says now-a-days.” Saying which, Mr. Maitland folded with great precision the letter he had been reading, and returned it to his daughter.

“And what am I to say to him in reply, papa?”

“Say to him, my dear? why, what would you say to anybody who proposed to share five and threepence a day with you for life?”

“But it's not five and threepence,” said Edith, blushing, but boldly.

“Then it was until very lately; and it can't be much more now. Say what you like to him; and as he's a gentleman in every sense of the word, refuse him like a lady. That's what you meant to do, I suppose?” But instead of a ready answer, Edith Maitland hung her

head ; and her father knew, though he chose to assume ignorance, that that was not at all Edith Maitland's inclination, whatever her intention might have been.

Presently the old gentleman looked at her again, and nothing certainly ever affected Mr. Maitland more than a dolorous expression on his daughter's countenance. He had very little sympathy, not much feeling, not an atom of sentiment ; but he had a great idea of the fitness of things ; and Edith's face is the very worst background to a gloomy picture that can well be conceived. A diamond looks well upon velvet ground ; and rude contrasts, where the object to be exhibited requires to be strikingly set off, are all very well. But where it is not so—and sorrow is seldom the better for being displayed—the less violent the contrast the better. Charming blue eyes, a fine red and white complexion, golden hair, glistening little teeth between coral lips, and an amazing amount of dimples, go badly with tears or frowns, and find no room among them for melancholy. He was sorry to see that her inclination did not, as usual, go with her duty.

“Charles Courtland is a person for whom I have the greatest regard, my dear child ; he's a very excellent son, I believe, and soldier, but not equally well calculated for a son-in-law. Besides, he's a bad memory, Edith.”

“How so, papa ?”

“He has forgotten a conversation we had on this subject.”

“That's hardly possible, I should think,” said Edith Maitland, not cheerfully.

“Then he either thinks that I am given to change my

opinion, or that I do not clearly express my real one. Now that's not so, my dear child."

"I never knew you do the one, nor fail to do the other." And the absurd necessity of the confession gave a little tinge of the ridiculous to so unusual an assent. "But I don't understand you."

"You do me no more than justice, and I'll explain. About a fortnight back conversation turned between Charles Courtland and myself into a channel of this kind. Mind, my dear, it was not literally personal, as regards you and himself; but I had an idea that it might become so: Do you know what I told him? I told him I valued your happiness (we put it hypothetically, you know, for decency's sake) too highly to let you marry any one without a moderate income, and a certain sum of money at command."

"Did you indeed say that, papa?" enquired Edith, reddening, half with shame and half with anger.

"Indeed I did, my dear: and what's more I meant it," and here old Mr. Maitland refreshed himself with a good pinch of snuff.

"But what need to proclaim anything of the sort to—to—a young man, who——"

"What need, indeed, seeing he is incapable of understanding a hint so delicately conveyed? Why, it was to save you the inconvenience of having to answer some such letter as this. And, Edith, in order to avoid mistakes, I put the figure at what I considered your lowest value; and which, I'm sorry to say—well! my dear, don't look so very reproachfully at me, for I am sorry to say—is far beyond our friend Charlie's most sanguine expecta-

tions. I told him that, independently of a profession, a young lady situated—well, I said situated—as you are, could never marry, with my consent, under ten thousand pounds.”

“Ten thousand pounds!” repeated Edith, with her eyes open, and in which a tear, partly sorrowful, partly irascible, began to appear. This certainly was an estimate of herself which was beyond the ability of her friend Charlie, at all events for some years to come. Then the old Scotchman continued :

“Yes ; I told him ten thousand. Now, my dear, don’t be unreasonable, but listen to me.” And as she was by nature obedient, instead of leaving the room for a private cry—which is the correct thing to do before a hard-hearted father—she sat down in the chair which she had lately quitted.

“Certainly, papa, if you wish it.”

“Well, I do, just to make things pleasant. I’ve just twenty minutes before I go into the City, and I’ll tell you all about it. I’m sure you’ll see the matter with my eyes before that time.”

“Perhaps I may, papa.” And Edith had quite resolved that it as little became Mr. Maitland’s daughter to change her mind, as Mr. Maitland himself ; but she did not say so much about it.

“You’ve been brought up, my dear, in the enjoyment of considerable comfort. You have a good house, a carriage, a maid, good society, occasional change, and as many bonnets as are good for you, to say nothing of a fair allowance of liberty and pocket money. You don’t go to the Queen’s balls, you’ve not the private entrée to

the park, nor a diamond necklace ; and you've only an occasional opera-box : these last are luxuries."

Edith assented : " I know how happy I am at home, papa ; and how kind and good you are to me."

" I was sure you'd say so, my dear, and I believe you think it. Well, all these things cost money—not a great deal, but money. There are a great many men come here, my love, who could afford to give you this, and much more ; but as long as you prefer your old father's company, and what you've got, to any new speculation, I'm satisfied, and can't grumble at an arrangement which secures me your company."

" My dear papa, how can you talk so?" and she got up and kissed him.

" Because it just represents the facts, my dear. You know Glossop had six thousand a year, and has since made forty thousand pounds in the Chalk and Dabblestone Company."

" And has lately married his washerwoman's daughter."

" Well, my dear, that's true ; but it was partly your fault. There was Colonel Wigmore, a large shareholder in the Gravesend Oyster Propagation Society, with a fine landed estate of his own——"

" He was over fifty, papa ; besides, after all, he never really proposed."

" Because you never would let him. However, that was your business, not mine ; there was Wormwood——"

" Who abused all his acquaintances, and positively made one hate one's fellow-creatures with a bitterness incompatible with love for anybody. Surely, papa, you wouldn't compare Charlie Courtland with these men,"

"Certainly not, my dear ; they could have given you what you can't do without, and he cannot."

"I didn't think your views were so mercenary."

"Mercenary ! Courtland has his pay, and two hundred a year. He told me so. He has expectations from his own father, at the old gentleman's death, which is apparently a long way off, and from your father (he hinted as much) both before and after death, which event, I hope, is equally distant with the other."

Edith laughed in spite of herself.

"Now you see your existence must depend upon somebody's death, at least what you have been accustomed to consider existence ; and as to luxuries, well, they can't be provided under a couple of funerals. You'll have five thousand pounds the day you marry, and all I have in the world the day I go out of it, whoever you marry, as long as he's an honest man and a gentleman." The tears did find their way into Edith's eyes again, in spite of herself. "Charlie Courtland is a gentleman, and an honest man ; but you see he can't marry you, my dear, on five thousand pounds, though he certainly shall, if you wish it, when he comes with another ten to add to it — and then I think it ought to be all settled upon yourself."

So spoke Mr. Maitland—a very odd sort of person to look at and to talk to, but quite an average sort of father after all—not melodramatic perhaps, but good enough for genteel comedy. What he said he generally said in broad Scotch, which must be imagined. He was eminently practical—did say what he meant and stuck to it.

In person he was just the man who would talk and

act as he did. He was short and wiry, with a thin sharp-featured face, light hair, now turning gray, short and wiry too, and brushed up, so as to represent the characteristics of a terrier dog. He was strictly neat in dress, and rigid in the performance and exaction of duty. He was fond of money for the sake of that respectability of position which it gave, but he cared nothing for it beyond that point, knowing that the loftiest trees are the first to be struck by lightning, and that the highest towers fall with the heaviest crash. He was a merchant of the City of London—an honest one, a reputable man on 'Change, one who had saved something, and whose name made paper valuable. He had no passions—that was one secret of his success. He had one inveterate abomination—a race-course.

Heaven knows why he concentrated all his aversions upon this national institution. Had he ever been forestalled with a Derby favourite, or had one which broke a blood vessel immediately before starting, had he been legged by a Welsher, or paid a trainer's bill, or been made to ride in a racing saddle, or spent an evening with a fashionable light weight, he might have been forgiven for his insane caprice. But none of these things had ever happened to him. No, it was one of those obsolete fancies which do crop up among old-fashioned people still. He had heard so much that was bad of it, such demoralisation among the little, such loss of dignity among the great, that he believed the devil to have been the first bookmaker, and Epsom to have been the scene of his earliest exploits.

“Now, my dear Edith, I'm sure we understand each

other," said he, kissing her affectionately ; "if you'll order the carriage at five o'clock, I'll come home early, and go for a drive with you into the Row."

What I said about Edith Maitland, as regards her personal appearance, is, I suppose, enough. One cannot be eternally describing pretty women : pleasant as is the amusement, and various as are their charms, there must be some limitation. I always have a heroine, and I always make them as good-looking as I can. Edith Maitland is no exception to the rule—in fact, she's the prettiest woman that I know. It will be gratifying to the lovers of propriety in literature, or to the admirers of the French dramatists, the only true Unitarians, to know that I am not about to infringe upon classic rules to any great extent. The action of this little story is comprised in a week. The day on which the above conversation took place between Edith Maitland and her father was Monday the twentieth of May last, the day immediately preceding the Epsom meeting of the current year. London was quite full, just what it always is upon such occasions. Not only were the habitués of town to be met with everywhere, but lodgings were taken, empty houses were brushed up, chandeliers were uncovered, and valuable bits of ornamental china stowed away, while the strangers remained. Long's and Limmer's, and all hostleries of good repute were filled with both arms of the service on leave, and legs *à discretion*, and every sign of the great national fête was to be met with between Charing Cross and the corner of Albert Gate, at one time or another of the day.

It was about half-past five o'clock in the afternoon

when four or five respectable types of the Young England school stood at the corner of the Row, talking on the all-absorbing topic of the day. For it must be admitted, that wild as is the career of Beales, and great as is his reputation, not only he, but even the chairman of the Tailors' Union, sink into nothing on the eve of a race meeting. Why does the leader of the House of Commons submit to the postponement of some great question, such as the language of the lobby, or the claims of a rotten borough, for an Olympic revel? Because he can't help himself. He has taken the sense of the House, and the nonsense has beaten him. "*Fiat Derbia, ruat cœlum.*"

"Sad business this about the Rake, bore for his owner," says Tom Hatchett of the heavies, a sort of Bond Street soldier whenever he could get away.

"I don't suppose his owner cares a bit about it, he's made himself safe on Vauban," says Captain Snaffles, an authority on all such matters with his regiment, which is just now at Canterbury, with the exception of himself and a rather fast cornet, who has got his first leave since joining.

"I don't believe he's broken down at all," joins in Speerwell, a lancer.

"Nobody said he had," replied Snaffles, "only a blood vessel. It won't interfere with his running. P——'s had a telegram to say he walked round his paddock and ate a quartern of oats, as soon as he got in, and then rolled in his box, as comfortably as if nothing had happened. How do, Charlie?"

"Who told you that?" says another, a fresh arrival.
"I believe they've shot him."

"You go and lay against him at Tattersall's, and you'll find they'll shoot you."

"Well, where did you hear it?"

"I know it's true; Boreas, the fellow that writes for the *Thunderer*, told me."

"Then I'll be hanged if I believe a word of it. I don't see why he shouldn't win."

"Why shouldn't Hermit win?" says Charlie Courtland, who had arrived in the middle of the conference, and who never made a bet in his life.

"Hermit's as good as dead; I had it from the best authority."

"Who's that?" enquired Charlie, somewhat sceptical of these good authorities.

"It came from a fellow who's in the stable: a great friend of Captain M——."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite," says the other, who knew nothing about it beyond newspaper report.

"If I was I'd go and back him," says Snaffles. "You'd get just one hundred to one against him. I'm sorry for Chaplin. Capital two-year old."

Charlie Courtland was not a betting-man, but he couldn't help weighing the words of the all-wise Snaffles, and the extraordinary odds which were being laid against him. "Ten thousand to one hundred," said he to himself several times. At that moment a very neat unpretending carriage passed into the Row at a foot's pace. "Charlie, there's your friend, Miss Maitland." He looked round, and just caught sight of that young lady as the carriage became lost in the crowd,

He had a letter in his pocket, which made him supremely melancholy—melancholy just to the verge of utter despair ; for it told him a truth which he knew would be religiously kept by the lady. It was a very good letter notwithstanding. It did not attempt to disguise from him that, if all things had been convenient, he would have been received by both father and daughter with open arms. Edith made no great parade of affection ; didn't talk about suicide, or hint at mutual charcoal, or go in for a broken heart. She laid great stress on the necessity of obedience to her father, and said that until the conditions he had insisted on were fulfilled, she had no hope of his yielding ; without his permission she would not marry. She said a word or two on patience and on hope : she did not say that she never would marry anybody else, but she really meant it at the time, and Charlie Courtland guessed it.

As he walked away from the coterie of agreeable friends he had been talking to he turned over her note in his breast-pocket and its contents in his mind. "This cursed ten thousand pounds," thought he. "How in the world am I ever to have ten thousand pounds until the governor dies ? And I don't want him to die ; he's a very good fellow, a capital governor to me ; besides, he's only fifty-two, and as hard as nails. I must sell out, and go on the Stock Exchange. And what a rage the governor will be in, to be sure ! Besides, perhaps I mayn't make it answer. I never was a great hand at figures. To be sure, there's that fellow Dumble began life when I did without a shilling, and lives in Rutland Gate with a wife and three children, and one of the best broughams in London. Why can't I do as Dumble ?"

And Charlie had got thus far in a brown study, when—
“Hallo, old fellow! where the d—l are you coming to?”
said Peter Mayfair, a Guardsman, gentleman rider, heavy better, and rollicking bachelor, a great friend of Charlie Courtland’s, and always ready with advice, or anything but ready money, for his friends. Ready money, I mean; for as to paper there was not a more liberal young one out than Peter. “One would think you were in love, or had been backing the Rake at three to one.”

“But I haven’t. I wish I had backed something likely to win.”

“Ah! I didn’t know that was your game, Charlie. You’ve kept it very quiet. Vauban will win; but if you’re only going for a pony or two, you’ll have to pay precious dear for it. You won’t get more than six to four.”

“Sha’n’t I? Well, that’s no use at all. A hundred and fifty to a hundred.”

“No use at all,” says the other. “That’s just what I say. You can’t make money without some risk, you know. And what the deuce can a fellow do with a hundred and fifty when he’s got it?”

This sort of reasoning was very palatable to the perturbed state of Charlie Courtland’s mind. What was the use of a hundred and fifty to him?

“And how do you go down to Epsom, Charlie?” said the fashionable Peter.

“Epsom? I sha’n’t go to Epsom.” And Charlie gave a sulky lurch.

“Not go to Epsom? Oh, come, I say, old fellow!” And, after a prolonged stare of great astonishment, not deficient in intelligence, “You’re in love!”

"That's good. I suppose you think every fellow that don't go to Epsom is in love?"

"I'm sure they are," answered Peter readily enough; "and lots that do go too; so you'd better come. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll drive you down in the drag, and I'll put you on a good thing when we get there. What will satisfy you?—a hundred to one? Because I know something that's not quite a dead 'un at that price."

"I'll tell you what, Peter: if I could pull off ten thousand to a hundred, I should be the happiest fellow alive. I am in love, old fellow, with the most beautiful, the most charming, the most——"

"Yes, of course; so I conclude. All of you fellows are. When a fellow once becomes spooney, it's astonishing how hazy his vision is. But you come with me. I've a shocking bad one at that price myself to five hundred; and if he gets worse perhaps I may let you have a hundred of it. Only don't tell any one."

"I wouldn't have it known that I laid a hundred pounds about anything for half the world. Her father 'd never forgive it."

"Then if you don't know it you can't split before Wednesday, at all events. I'll tell you all about it then. Good-bye: be ready by 10'30 sharp." And Peter Mayfair and Charlie Courtland went different ways.

Monday and Tuesday were very anxious days for gentlemen who were making up their books and speculating on further chances for Wednesday. Two-thirds of London scarcely slept at all, four-fifths got but a very feverish nap toward morning; and these dreamed of Vauban, Marksman, Van Amburgh, and the possible Rake, whose blood

vessel seemed to be mended again. But there are a select few who care no more for the Derby than they do for the Woking Cemetery, or any other receptacle for the dead. They never go near it; they hate the name of it; they consider the turf a national disgrace; they believe all the three-year olds to be four-year olds; the Jockey Club to be a South Sea Stock Company, and the owner of a racehorse to be the incarnation of the enemy of mankind. Old Maitland was one of these eccentric gentlemen who deduced universal conclusions from particular premises, though I suppose he hardly called his singular ideas by so philosophical a name.

He had never been to a race-course since he was a boy. He never sent anybody from his house to one, he never was asked by any of his clerks or servants permission to indulge in such a monstrous temptation, and certainly, had he been a member of Parliament, would have annually opposed the motion for the annual adjournment. The Olympic Games, he said, was a religious festival, at which there was no "ten to one bar one;" and the analogy between that and the Derby was ridiculous, if not something worse. The first part of his statement was true: it was a religious festival. The second was not, for there was an equivalent to the betting-ring even at Athens and Corinth.

But we may as well return to our hero and heroine. The former was exceedingly miserable, at least he thought so. Perhaps it's not surprising that he should have felt so. He had cherished a badly founded hope that old Maitland would have done anything for his daughter, even to parting with a handsome sum of ready money. His

argument (if gentlemen in his position ever condescend to argument; but it appears to me to be quite inconsistent with love) was something after this kind. "Old Maitland must love such a daughter almost as much as I do. I'd give her anything in the world I have, if I could get the chance; ergo, he'll think nothing of just enough to keep us going, say fifteen or even twenty thousand; and with my income, and the use of his carriage, we might get on deuced well. Of course I should sell, and invest the proceeds in wine. Capital business a wine merchant's—quite a different thing from any other." Then he, by an easy and natural transition, ran over in his mind the gentlemanly, well-received wine merchants of his acquaintance. Mr. W— (as T— W— it occurred to him mentally), and T— H—, he thought he could rough it in the same manner, and even drink his own champagne without a grimace under like circumstances—and C— and D—, and half a dozen more rose up at once to view, and presented such a pleasant flattering picture, so much more pleasant and flattering than the pleasure of mounting guard, or even presiding at the mess-dinner, that he looked upon his fate as sealed, and no more dreamt of a refusal than his intended father-in-law dreamt of the Goodwood Cup.

And really there was a great deal to say for this favourable view of matrimony. To be useful it should be early. Waiting destroys half the charm. What's the use of money, excepting to purchase happiness, or of a daughter, excepting to make her a wife? What such happiness, too, as a cheerful, rather good-looking son-in-law,—cheap at almost any money—and the daughter

of the same way of thinking? A grandfather—and I recommend this view of the case to stern parents—is nothing remarkable at seventy: they're common enough; but a grandfather at fifty, still capable of wearing well-made boots, and riding his son-in-law's best horses, or, better still, keeping such as he will condescend to ride, is a remarkable person, and deserves the franchise.

Now when Charlie began to review his case after the compulsory rejection, which, as I have before said, was put in the most favourable manner, though there was no doubt about the matter, he saw all this, or rather its worst side: its negative, its upside-down, if I may so call it. Poor fellow! he remembered so well the way in which he had pumped old Maitland about a third party, and how frankly the old man had made his views known to his young friend over a bottle of excellent claret, and some Spanish olives. "No young woman in my daughter's position," said he, "ought to marry a man with less than ten thousand pounds available capital, and the profession or business of a gentleman." Of course Charlie had bowed his head, and solemnly said he thought so. He did not think so in his own case; nobody ever does. He argued like a lover then, not like a philosopher. "You see," and here the old gentleman was right as to practice, and wrong as to theory, "when a man can afford to give his daughter a decent sum of money on her wedding-day, and means to leave her everything at his death, he expects an equivalent."

"More fool he," thought Charlie, after the rejection; "if he's got money he ought to expect none, and *vice*

versa. My old governor would give me anything, but then he has nothing ; in fact he's very like me, and what I'd do for Edith. However, it's no use maundering about it ; all I want to know is, how I'm to get ten thousand pounds out of an allowance of two hundred a year, besides my pay."

It was a difficulty, most men will admit. Falling back on the governor was about as useful as falling back upon a heap of stones. He had not even an old aunt, nor a godmother ; and though poison reads very well under the careful management of Miss Braddon, there wasn't anybody to poison, excepting his intended father-in-law. The wine business had been the result of two cigars, and a very good mail-phaeton, which rattled past his window with a pair of high-stepping cobs ; and City life generally had assumed a better appearance upon the arrival of an East End millionaire and his wife, in a particularly neat barouche, two doors off his own house. Speculation is speculation, whether on Epsom Downs or in Capel Court, and it was not till his unlucky walk in the Row that the possibility of such an outrage on his previous respectability as a lucky wager suggested itself to his mind.

Now Charlie was not a gambler : nor vicious in any way. He wasn't in debt, nor gluttonous, nor a wine-bibber, nor avaricious ; but he sadly wanted ten thousand pounds at this moment ; and he swore if he got it that he'd make a good use of it. He never had had more than a five pound note in his life at a time ; and five pound notes were no use to him now unless he put twenty of them together. If he wanted to preserve his good

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resolutions too, which, in a nation of gamblers, did him infinite credit, he was most unfortunate, not on'y in his day, but in the companions he met with. As he sauntered along the day before the Derby, and the one after the rejection of his suit, there was but one topic of conversation from one end of the Row to the other.

"Plaudit's a dead 'un."

"He'll come to the post, for a hundred even."

"Done with you, Jenks," and the two gentlemen booked it.

"They say Wroughton had a sore back, when Van Amburgh beat him at Bath."

"I don't care what Wroughton had, he must be better than Vauban by that running."

"Well, then, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll lay you a thousand to a hundred about Van, and you shall lay me five to two about the duke's horse."

"Done" and "done."

"Nobbler, old boy, what's the best outsider?"

"What? to lay against, or to back?" says Nobbler.

"Oh! to back, of course. I want to lay out a tenner. I've only one bet."

"Why there's Fitz-Ivan, or the Moor, or Roquefort," says Nobbler, mentioning two or three more, with the prices.

"Why not Hermit, Chaplin's horse?"

"Ha, ha, ha," roars Nobbler, "he's as good as boiled. Here, I'll lay you five hundred to five." And the price so frightened Charlie, that he went further on.

Beneath the wide-spreading beech, almost opposite William Street, watching the equestrians and pedestrians

in the Row, not much thinned (for Tuesday at Epsom, after all, is only meant for the very high and the very low), sat four young men of what we call in our intense snobbism the Upper Ten, like the *decem sestertia*, short for Ten Thousand, and as Charlie Courtland approached the chair the ominous number would come into his head. Two of the four he knew, and one of the two was Peter Mayfair.

"And how do you know he broke a blood-vessel?" said one.

"His owner had a telegram," replies a second.

"How do you know?" says a third.

"Because I saw it," rejoins Number Two, "and seeing is believing."

"How do you know the owner didn't send it himself?" says Peter, upon which there was a dead silence for a minute or two, and then one of the three, who manifestly had been studying the penny-a-liners, and who, consequently, could not know much about it, ventured to state his conviction that "he never broke a blood-vessel at all, but was doing hard work up to the last moment, and was at that time, at Epsom, ready to start and win if he could, only it was well known he couldn't stay. Why wasn't he at forty to one instead of nine, if he was all wrong?"

"Now, Courtland, now's your time; take ten thousand to one," cries Bookham.

"Don't do anything of the sort, Charlie," says Peter Mayfair; "I've done your business for you; you're going to stand a long shot. I told you I'd something good, and I'm going to give you a slice."

"Is it very good, Peter? If so, let me have fifty of it."

"It's either very good or very bad indeed, and I don't mean to part with any more until to-morrow. There, Charlie, there's your hundred gone," saying which he handed him over a slip out of his betting-book, on which was written ten thousand to one hundred against Hermit. "Now you may go and have a quiet night, and mind you bring lots of coats to-morrow, for if it's like this on the Downs you'll want something stronger than champagne and plovers' eggs to keep you warm."

Edith Maitland, while her lover was driven to desperate courses by her father's determination, behaved with as much discretion as is seemly in a lady so situated. She neither tore her hair nor her petticoats while she was left at home, but she did think very seriously of her affairs, for she knew her father to be one of those men who are always said to be as good as their word. Now, that's a very disagreeable character ; and Edith determined upon being as good as her inclination. For the present it amounted to some delicacy of appetite, a rather stubborn determination not to originate remarks at table, an indifference to new bonnets, and a disinclination for an opera-box on Thursday night. She intended, however, to come round as it suited her, to encourage Charlie as a casual visitor, to refuse any good offers that might fall in her way, and to take the thing up with a rather high hand when the first blush of their little difference was over.

She had no doubt, mentally, that the thing would come right. She knew nothing about Charlie's resources, but

she thought he looked quite a ten thousand pound man, and was sure he'd get the money somehow or other—not this year, perhaps, but next, or, at most, the one after that. What was the use of a crack regiment, and a large acquaintance, if it was not to end happily at last? All romances did end happily; and was real life worse than fiction? Impossible! and she went to bed on Tuesday, and fell asleep, thinking of Charlie.

The insane old Scotchman who had created all this hubbub, because he would not let the girl marry a sort of better-class casual—not an absolute pauper, but, as he thought, very near it—went away from his home on Wednesday morning with a very bad cup of tea, and a general feeling that he was all in the wrong for the present. Edith had only eaten one piece of dry toast, without butter (*while he was at home*), and had declined talking at breakfast, though he began on Scotch Reform, and the Compound Householder. These interesting subjects having been indulged in without contradiction or assent, he got tired of talking, and walked off to the City.

Of course he knew nothing about the Derby—the only man in London who did not. He was a little surprised to see so many empty barouches posting about the squares and streets, and to find the hansom cabs and the harness quite clean, all going one way, and resolutely declining to accept of him as a fare. At last he took a four-wheeler, and found himself at his office—a snug, quiet, comfortable, turkey-carpet-looking place, with several newspapers airing at a good fire, and setting at defiance the sleet and snow which was falling outside.

Presently his clerk came in and stirred up the fire to concert pitch. "Mr. Stephenson come yet?"

"No, Sir, not yet," said Jobson; "there are two notes on your table, Sir," and Jobson laughed, for he had heard of Derbies, though he never spent his holidays in such pursuits. "One of 'em looks like Mr. Stephenson's writing, Sir, and the other was left by Mr. Fulthorpe's servant half an hour ago."

"Dear me! What an extraordinary thing! Mr. Stephenson was so bad with toothache last night that he fears he must absent himself to-day, and here's Mr. Fulthorpe obliged to go into the country to see a relative who is not expected to live, but will be sure to be back again to-night." The gentleman with the toothache was consoling the one with the dying relative; and as they were travelling towards Epsom in a hansom cab, it may be supposed that, if still alive, it was thereabouts that she lived.

Everybody that reads "Temple Bar" knows all about the Derby; the sleet, the snow, the wind, and the silence of astonishment which greeted Hermit as the winner. The prophets prophesied falsely; and after all was over, the nonsense that was written about condition, appearance, shape, pace, would it not fill several volumes? All we have to do is with Charlie's ecstasies, when he saw Vauban give way, and Marksman collared by a lad in rose-coloured jacket, whose legs hang as they should hang down a saddle, who rode his horse brilliantly, and who simply outpaced Marksman in the last four strides. There he sat, stupefied at first, then an unobserved spectator in the next box, standing near him as the numbers

went up, said, "Hermit after all." Then, when he recollected all the mighty things that Mr. Chaplin and Captain Machell and Daley, between them, had effected for him, his throat filled nearly to bursting, and his eyes with tears. Then he wondered what he ought to do, and rushed down to the front to discharge his overburdened feelings into the ear of somebody on the drag. Having crossed the course, with a curious sensation, akin to the beginning of typhus fever, a burning thirst, a sort of vertigo, and bloodshot eyes, he came in due time to the drag; and the first sight did more towards restoring him to himself than anything else. There was Peter eating with much deliberation from a large plateful of pigeon-pie, and throwing the bones, with an exquisite sense of the ludicrous, into the woolly wig of an Ethiopian serenader. Without inconveniencing himself, when he caught sight of Charlie, all he said was, "Come up here, Charlie, we've done well to-day. Five-and-twenty thou., and ten to you, that's five-and-thirty; let's hope we may be paid. Now come up and drink." And it's a curious fact in physiology, that the possibility of not getting the money restored Charlie Courtland to his senses, and a tone to his stomach.

Peter drove a very jovial coachful home again; and that he had not exceeded may be surmised by the fact that he only turned over, and that very gently, one donkey-cart by the way. I think if I suddenly found myself on a drag, with the prospect of finding thirty-five thousand pounds at the end of the journey, I should upset all the costermongers' carts on the road.

The week passed as such weeks do pass; the head-

aches of Thursday were cleared up in time for the Oaks of Friday, and as Saturday came opportunely between that and Sunday, the following Monday found everybody all right again. Everybody, that is, that had nothing to do with the settling ; of that all I can say is, that certain scribblers imagine that they pay a great compliment to the aristocracy of England, when they notify the fact that a nobleman, having lost a very large sum of money, pays it. This is one of those left-handed compliments, which is scarcely comprehensible to anybody but Lord Dunderbary. That noble lord, and other noble lords and gentlemen, paid their debts of honour, as might naturally be expected, and the consequence was that on Monday afternoon Peter Mayfair was once more (for he had had his ups and downs) a capitalist, and Charlie Courtland was a ten thousand pounds man.

I dare say many men think nothing of carrying ten thousand pounds about in their pockets, but that has never occurred to me, nor had it to Charlie ; and with all these masses of silver paper, these perishable flimsies, which feel as if they mean flying away, he was rather uncomfortable. I suppose that delicate texture, characteristic of bank notes, is metaphorical of easy decay. Such a thing never could have been meant to keep ; and their value may be estimated by the length of time such things have existence. When Charlie Courtland got his he paid the greatest respect to the first few hundreds, and then began cramming the rest into his breeches pockets, as others had done before him.

The first place he went to, from Tattersall's, was to Mr. Maitland's house, in Chester Street, not far to go.

His heart was as full as his pockets, and he had had great difficulty in keeping away from the street till he could satisfy all demands.

It was about five in the afternoon, and when he reached the house the carriage was at the door.

"Is Mr. Maitland at home?"

"Miss Maitland is, Sir; but I don't know whether master is come in or not."

"I'd rather see Mr. Maitland, if possible," which seemed odd to Jeames, but no ways unreasonable considering the knowledge of affairs which had reached the servants' hall.

Mr. Maitland was at home, and, though glad enough to see Charlie, could not help expressing his surprise; the conversation opened upon the weather, then it got to the Reform Bill, and then to the weather again; at last Mr. Maitland mentioned the engagement with his daughter.

"Ah! just so, Mr. Maitland. You have been made acquainted with my wishes. I fear I was presumptuous; but——"

"Not at all, Charlie; but you know my sentiments on the subject. There is nobody I esteem more. It would have been my greatest pleasure to have welcomed you as my son-in-law; and, let me say so at once, will be so, still, whenever you can present yourself in circumstances which would justify——"

"Yes, Mr. Maitland, I know—that is, I believe I was foolish to have said or thought so little of the most important of all objects; but fortune—that is a fortunate—a speculation, I may call it—has placed ten thousand

pounds at my disposal, independently of my commission, and I am come to lay it at Miss Maitland's feet."

During this speech the old gentleman's gooseberry eyes had expressed as much as they could express of anything—we may call it—astonishment. And when he recovered his breath sufficiently to speak, he said or rather gasped, "And the security is good, my dear Charles—for let me tell you, in the mercantile world there are scoundrels as great to be met with as on the turf itself. The security, my dear boy, what is this speculation of yours?"

Charlie was not a man of business exactly, but he seems to have understood human nature; for he immediately spread upon the table, before the astonished gaze of old Maitland, the proceeds of Hermit's year. They didn't stay to count them; but in a few seconds, having assured the old gentleman that that was the amount of the notes on the table, he was ushered into the drawing-room to make his own explanation of this sudden reappearance; and it was not till four days afterwards that the old gentleman recollected that he had not yet ascertained the nature of so effective a speculation.

"Mercantile, Charlie, but of what particular kind?"

"Well, horseflesh, Sir, to tell you the truth."

"Horseflesh! was it really! Now I refused to have anything to do with that very thing; though we have had

A French Company over here for weeks before the Exhibition, arranging for the business. And I've since heard that the consumption in various forms is prodigious."

"Prodigious!" repeated Charlie, mightily tickled at

the blunder, but preserving his gravity. "Yes, and do you know, there's a friend of mine in Paris, rather agwa, who says that's the only city in the world where they put the *carte* before the horse."

They're going to be married on the twenty-first of June ; but Charlie declines taking any more shares in the Horseflesh Company. He doesn't expect such a pull out of a dead one again in his life.





POOR TOM.

IN these days, when the making or spending of money seems to be the grand object of every class ; when the nobility is not too proud to furnish directors for bubble companies, nor the shoe-blacks' brigade too low to enter upon the turf as a professional occupation, most of my readers will understand what I mean by " a guinea-pig." As some witty writer observes of a *glacier*, that it is not much like a man with a piece of putty in his hand, and a pane of glass under his arm, so I may instruct those who stand in need of the information, that my guinea-pig has no resemblance to the sleek, piebald, or particoloured little animal that is up your sleeve, and round your neck, and down your back, all in a minute. No ; my guinea-pig is so called from the coin of that ilk, which, though it has long given place in the world to the meaner sovereign, is still known and recognised among schoolmasters, physicians, and certain horsedealers, the latter being amenable to persuasion on the subject of modern coinage, the two former

remaining thoroughly conservative, as is their interest, as to the real coin of the realm.

But to speak strictly, though a guinea-pig is so known among City or mercantile men, as one who seeks or accepts his guineas under certain definite circumstances, it must not be imagined that he really stops at that modest fee.

One guinea, two guineas, three guineas a day, on as many different companies, not unfrequently reward his labours at the board of some mining speculation, hotel company (limited liability), railway scheme, or land, building or banking society. To these, collectively or individually, the guinea-pig belongs, and upon the direction he lives, moves, and has his being. This zoological curiosity, which, from some late specimens, seems to have been created for the purpose of devouring widows houses, is to be found north, south, east, and west. In this last quarter he is especially to be seen; and as his income increases or diminishes with the gullibility of a wealthy public, I need hardly add that the roll of Battle Abbey is not more numerous, nor more distinguished for the false position and questionable qualifications of its members.

But there are good and bad of all sorts; nor am I about to plead for the virtues of my friend Brassey Staverton; I only say what is universally admitted by our mutual acquaintances: that a more cheerful, gentlemanly, good-tempered fellow never lived—Heaven only knows how till lately—than Brassey. “Where does Staverton get his money?” said one man. “A very expensive family,” said another. “That hack wasn’t bought for nothing,”

said a third ; and so on. There were not four better-dressed women than Mrs. Staverton and her daughters to be seen in the Row ; and as to Brassey himself, for a man of his years, say a round fifty, I don't know his equal. He was almost too good-looking and too well-dressed to be so popular ; for excellence is not popularity, which aphorism may give satisfaction to a great many, when read conversely. He was decidedly a first-class guinea-pig.

Mrs. Staverton was of the imperial class, I must admit. There was a chilling dignity of manner, which it seemed difficult to imagine that her husband could have ever penetrated. At dinner, when he called her "my dear," the hearer sat aghast ; and when she raised her head and replied over the iced pudding, "Mr. Staverton," the philosopher at once entered into the different states of being without, however, being any nearer the solution of his original doubts.

The family was charming. It is but justice to the ladies to say, that while they partook of the physical excellences of both parents, they were in manner, disposition, and affability, their father's own children. They were exceedingly good-looking ; two were dark, the other was fair. The eldest and youngest rejoiced in the glossiest of jet-black hair, with clear, though dark, complexions, and straight, classical features. The chignon of the second was of that much coveted colour which seems to throw back the beams of the sun, like the golden crest of a chestnut horse in high condition ; and her bright blue eyes, wide open, and affecting that pretty astonishment which no Miss Staverton ever yet felt, were in keeping

with her pretty dimples, and clear red-and-white skin. Without being particular in urging the details of their beauty, with which this story has nothing to do, I may say that a genuine cheerfulness and good-humour pervaded the "Graces," as they are still sometimes called by those who had nothing to do with the Smashem and Endoverend Building Society, in King William Street.

To say that Brassey Staverton was an extravagant man would scarcely be true. Men said that his things were rather neat than extravagant, and he was supposed to be satisfied with the necessities of life—good, rather than its luxuries, dearly purchased. As he was sometimes out in splendour, driving or riding in the Row, and at other times more modestly walking, but still with an air of fashion which could be buried under no bushel, in the same place, I may assume, with others, that my friend, Brassey Staverton, really cut his coat according to his cloth.

It can be no secret that business east of Temple Bar has been slack of late. Business being slack, money is tight—so tight that very little of it has escaped in the right direction. Even Brassey Staverton's good-humoured face looked longer, not perhaps among his friends, but certainly over his domestic iced pudding, which we here read for Mr. Thackeray's "veal," it being the height of the season. If he abated somewhat of his cheerfulness, Mrs. Staverton abated none of her dignity. She floated through the waters of society with all her sails set, and carried her convoy as majestically as usual. The chignons were as irreproachable as ever, and the crinolines as suggestive of death by fire as they ever had been.

Then came a crisis. Now a crisis is a very disagreeable thing to happen to a man like Staverton ; for it not only implies immediate necessity for that which he has not got, but previous anxiety, and a foreboding of evil which is just now realised. With your monied men, who know where to get relief when the shoe pinches, I have no sympathy ; the worst that can happen to such is an attack of indigestion, the postponement of a day's pleasure, or the sacrifice of a cherished project ; none of them dangerous, and two out of the three positively beneficial. But it is quite another matter with Brassey Staverton. He has had several attacks of indigestion ; his breakfasts have not agreed with him ; instead of the Row he has been more frequent in his visits to King William Street ; he has been very cognizant of the City article in the *Times*, and left the Paris correspondent and the domestic grievances men to his wife and children.

"Here are the books, Mr. Staverton," says that lady, turning her Juno-like head as she presented some half dozen limp-covered account-books to her equal half one Monday morning. "They come to rather less this week—only fourteen pounds seven ; but you gave me five pounds short last Monday, so you can write a cheque for the whole."

"But, my dear, do you really want a cheque this morning, for I'm rather in a hurry, and I must—go—into——" and here Mr. Staverton rather broke down.

"Oh ! of course it will do when you come back ; but as we're in the habit of settling these weekly bills on the Monday, and the tradesmen expect it——" and here

Mrs. Staverton looked at her husband, who drew out his cheque-book, and proceeded to add up fourteen pounds seven and five pounds, with a severity which would have befitted a much more difficult sum in arithmetic. He gave the money with a sigh, which almost indicated a doubt whether it would be cashed, and retreated by the front door.

"Oh, papa, such an opera-cloak ! you should have seen it," said the eldest Miss Staverton, returning from the opera, and finding her father still in the drawing-room, chewing the cud of reflection, more bitter than the roots of the buttercup. "I must have one like it." It had always been difficult for our friend Staverton to deny his daughter anything, so he was silent. "And papa," added the second, "you must get us a box for Saturday, Nillson is going to play in *Faust*, and I should like to see her idea of Margaret. She would look the character so well." Staverton smiled very 'dolefully. "Do you know, pa dear, Larkspur nearly upset the carriage to-night ; the sooner you change him the better, if you don't want to have your panels smashed," said the youngest lady, who helped herself to some sherry and water, while her father assured her he did not want to have the panels smashed, certainly, at present. Then the Graces retired to rest, and left Mr. and Mrs. Brassey Staverton to themselves.

"My dear," says he, "things are in a terrible state in the City. There's another great house gone for half a million ; and—and—we're very hard hit."

"Dear me ! what a sad thing !" says the lady, without much feeling ; "anybody we know ?"

"Stunner and Dashett. We're very much affected by it; we hold their bills to a large amount. I don't see how we can hold on."

"Mr. Staverton!!!" This was uttered in a voice of surprise and indignation to which no amount of interjections can do justice.

"My dear," says Staverton, collecting himself, and, indeed, emboldened by the attitude of his wife, "it's no use to mince matters, we must retrench. It's not too much to say that we've lost a great deal of money." Whether he meant the company in which he was director and shareholder, or himself personally, would be doubted by strangers. Set your minds at rest — Mr. Brassey Staverton never had much to lose, nor the company either. They were simply some hundreds of thousands on the wrong side.

Mrs. Staverton was alarmed. "There's my settlement, at all events; and pray, Mr. Staverton, don't look in that dreadful manner, or I must leave the room."

"My dear, you don't know what you're talking about. Can you live upon four hundred a year?" This was the first exhibition of temper yet seen on the part of Brassey Staverton, and he might be excused.

"Don't be ridiculous, Mr. Staverton; your shares in ——"

"Are not worth a halfpenny."

"The furniture, the pictures?"

"Have a lien upon them. The carriage must be given up, and we must look for a small house somewhere in the suburbs."

"The suburbs! what do you mean, Mr. Staverton—"

Hackney or Pimlico, or some such place as that?" Mrs. Staverton's geography had been neglected when young, at some public school for young ladies. "As to the carriage, the thing seems easy enough; we can have a neat single-horse brougham; the putting down one's carriage makes people talk, which is not pleasant."

"Who the devil do you think cares whether you keep a carriage or not? Nonsense about a single-horse brougham. Do you understand, my dear, that you will have just money enough to buy food and clothing, and nothing else?" The feelings of Mrs. Staverton were so outraged, and her incredulity so great, that her only reply was a short one. She took up a flat candlestick from the table, lighted it with trembling hands, and sighed "Poor Tom!"

No apology is necessary for having left him alone till now. With four ladies, and such ladies, to introduce, a son is of minor importance. The fact is, Tom Staverton is the son of the ex-director of the Ne'erdowneal and half a dozen other insolvent companies. As an only son should be, he was a great favourite with his mother and sisters; and being well-dressed, and moderately learned, like the former Fellows of All Souls', he was usually quoted and introduced whenever his name or his person could be made available as a peg or a prop. In the inmost recesses of their hearts the four women worshipped Tom; that is, they would have done, if the worldly nature of their daily pursuits had not a little dimmed their constitutional affection for an only son and brother. They never really knew how dear he was to them till they put him in the scale with a one-horse brougham, and found that

the latter kicked the beam ; they gave up all thoughts of this remnant of former grandeur, in order that Tom might finish his career at the university. The jolly old guinea-pig at Wiesbaden was desperately cut up at the prospect of his son having to leave the university as the result of his family misfortunes. So sincere was he in his regrets, and so doughty in his resolves, that he stinted himself to almost nothing ; he cut off his own supplies in wine, tobacco, gloves, patent-leather, and attendance, in order that his Tom should take a degree. But it would not do. Tom himself was as generous as his father, and much more honest ; and when he had once ascertained the real state of affairs, and knew that he must, at the most moderate computation, be a burden to his family, which they could ill afford, by continuing at Christ Church, he took his name off the books, and came to town, to see what he could do to add to, instead of take from, the general stock.

But Tom was in debt ; and the first thing his antiquated notions pointed out to him as needful, was a freedom from his embarrassments, which, small as the sum was, they now were. In speaking of Tom's debts, it is right to say that they were of such a limit as would have been considered praiseworthy in his former condition, and were only made culpable by his inability to discharge them. They scarcely exceeded that of the normal condition of an undergraduate, and, taken into consideration with regard to his former presumptions, were absolutely nil. But when a good fellow like Tom Staverton sees that even the hundred or two must be taken out of the insufficient income of a mother and sisters, or out of his own exer-

tions, he does not hesitate as to which he shall apply to for a relief. With this laudable intention of relieving the family of its anxiety on his account, and resolute in his design of finding something more profitable to do than driving to Woodstock, or shooting pigeons at Cowley, one fine morning in December the poor Tom of our story stood before them.

If his father had left some responsibilities behind him, which were not likely to be settled on this side of the grave, he had also left some friends, who, if they would give nothing else, would not grudge advice to his family, until some sort of arrangement could be entered into for the guinea-pig to retrieve his fortunes by the ordinary process of whitewashing. The general impression at the West End was that Brassey Staverton had been overtaken by that ruin which befell many deserving and equally comfortably-situated individuals. It was well that it should be so, though it was by no means shared in by the Eastern world, which gave some very unpleasant names to some of the ex-chairman's doings. The advantage was obvious. The family enjoyed that immunity from persecution which is the inevitable fate of those who have passed out of one portion of this world into another. As a rule, Mrs. Staverton and the Graces were as much forgotten in the Row, and the Drive, at the Zoo, and Opera, as if they had been dead and buried.

"Poor Staverton!" says Jones, swallowing his fish; "so he's gone with the rest, I hear. What's become of his wife and daughters, Smith, have you seen 'em lately?"

"Haven't an idea where they are now. Somewhere in the north, I should think."

"You used to be very intimate there, weren't you?"

"Ya-as," replies Smith; "but they went somewhere, and I've never seen 'em since."

Went somewhere! Of course; and as it did not happen to be in Smith's way, he had never seen them since. If Brassey Staverton began dining again, the Smiths would soon run up against him. It is a sort of honour that comes unlooked for, like Sir Walter Blount's; but it answers its purpose of a moving panorama, in which there is much to see, but little to make an impression.

Among the friends of the family there was one kind and rather homely old gentleman, well esteemed in the world for his character and his brains. For him Mr. Staverton had generally kept a good old dry bottle of port wine, and Mrs. Staverton the cold shoulder. Now that they were under a cloud, old Mr. Elzevir remembered the former and forgot the latter, and, if nobody else knew where the family was gone to, he at least managed to discover their quiet and unobtrusive semi-detached house at Brompton. His advice was acceptable, at all events, possibly with the hope that it might be profitable; and Tom was grateful for the interest which the well-known publisher expressed in his concerns.

"Send me a specimen, Tom, of what you can do, and I'll see what I can do for you." This was said to poor Tom in a small back parlour, in a quiet street at the West End of London, after a long conversation on the blank prospect which, as a literary man, had opened upon him.

Tom had no great marvels to recount of his success at present. He had been working as daily tutor to a young

gentleman, whose delicacy of constitution rendered him unfit for school life, and whose mental deficiencies, supported by easy methods to severe studies, had become now too apparent even to his own father, a retired book-maker of considerable eminence. The old gambler himself was not very fluent at reading or writing, and particularly shaky about spelling; the pronunciation, too, of the present racing nomenclature was against him; but he was quite at home in mental arithmetic, and his son's talents for miscalculation first opened his eyes to the deficiencies of his education. Poor Tom's services were valued by Mr. Barwon's own estimate of the *literæ humaniores*, and recompensed accordingly. He still felt himself a weight at Brompton.

But he had also one other means of lightening the burdens of his family, and hopes of adding eventually to their diminished income. He was a contributor to a newspaper called *The World we Live In*, as being a comprehensive title, and one which embraced every subject, from the habits of the field-mouse to the Atlantic cable on the one hand, and the new appropriation clauses to the simplest domestic grievance of the compound householder on the other. But *The World we Live In* had one fault, like its antetype—it didn't always pay; and poor Tom was one of those who was allowed to write as much as he liked, and on any subject, so long as his claims for remuneration were kept within due limits. He wrote enough for it, and to spare; but not having the good fortune to be a personal friend or relation of the editor, he was placed on a much lower tariff than those fortunate fellows who claimed as founder's kin.

Who has not read poor Tom's withering censures on the turf-scandals of the day ; the runs that he made over impossible countries ; his wonderful anecdotes of the canine race ; his talented diagnosis of the grouse disease ; his explanation of the principles of the chaff-cutting machine, which might be more profitably studied in a livelier journal ; his masterly dissection of the Chancellor of the Exchequer ; and his able review of the new edition of the "Principia ?" His mark was well known in the pages of *The World we Live In*, and Tom was beginning to be regarded as quite a rising young man, only *The World we Live In* didn't pay—at least, it didn't pay Tom.

"Why, Staverton, old fellow, you must be making quite a small fortune."

"Yes, I am indeed," replied Tom, with the tears almost in his eyes.

But at last came a suggestion, which to a half educated and wholly unprovided-for individual sounded like a god-send ; and it came from Mr. Elzevir, a person quite capable of judging of its practicability.

"Could you write a book ?"

"I'd rather read one for you," replied Tom, somewhat diffident.

"Very likely, but I could not trust to your verdict. So we should both have to read it, and I couldn't afford that. But could not you write one ?"

"On what subject—science ?"

"That would pay your grandchildren, if it were very well done, and nothing superseded it before your death."

"History ?"

"Heaven forbid ! Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof—never anticipate disappointment."

"Sport ?"

"The ground's preoccupied, and, like the parson's runaway pony, not worth catching when caught. No; write a novel."

"And who's to print it when it's done ? and what's it to be about ?"

"I'll manage the first ; and as to the second, why, surely your own imagination, if you've no experience, would do something. Look at this thing I have before me. That's a novel—you never read such nonsense. It's a picture of no age, no manners, and beyond the existence of the chimneypot-hat, of no epoch or country. There's not a character in it that acts upon any conceivable principle or motive. They all act like puppets, with a blind man pulling the strings. But I must give—well, I won't say what for it."

"Why buy it at all ?"

"For want of a better. There's a famine, and the people cry aloud for bread ; if they can't get it, they'll take stones. Besides which, it has its advantages. There's a murder, two suicides, several cases of bigamy, a highway robbery, a sermon, an intelligent working man, who becomes Prime Minister ; a house full of dukes, a death from hunting, and an Irish borough reduced to a heap of ashes by a Fenian general. It is written very smartly, quantities of quotations in all languages, and several dialogues on scientific subjects between the working man and the Chancellor of the Exchequer from 'Mangnall's Questions,' in which the former has much the best of it

—so that it's sure to be a success. Yet I think you could do something better if you'd try."

"Then I will try, Mr. Elzevir, for I want money and employment. Give me a suggestion or two, and in three months I'll bring you something better or worse than your present venture."

"Well then, listen to me. Never mind about plot, I mean as to structure: you must have some. Make it as you go on. You know that Walter Scott did so sometimes, and he's an authority, though no one would read him now. Bring all you know to bear upon the work without reference to probability. Mind you have plenty of incident, and you need not care about startling your reader by an utterly unlooked-for termination. The end, too, in a novel will justify any means you may think well to employ. Be particular about your characters; everybody likes to recognise a friend well shown up: make them all say the sharpest things imaginable, lots of high life and low life; all novelists live in the one or the other, most of them in both. There, there are hints enough. Now go, and the sooner you have finished the better," saying which the kind-hearted old man put a cheque, by way of instalment, into Tom's hands, and began turning over the pages of his unpromising MS.

"But—Sir—" said Tom, hesitating, and much surprised by a liberality to which he was not always accustomed; "I've not done anything yet to entitle me to ——"

"Yes, you have—you've promised; and that's a retainer."

But Tom Staverton still stood looking first at the

cheque, and then at the donor. At last he took courage to say :

“And how about the critics? I’m afraid of the critics.”

“Critics! Do you know the meaning of the word? There’s very little criticism extant. Criticism means discernment, nice discrimination. Don’t be afraid of that. Criticism was a profession—an honourable calling, a high branch of literature—of course there are exceptions to every rule; but there are far too many books written to be honestly reviewed—yours won’t be read.”

“That would be a great relief to my mind,” said Tom, greatly in ignorance of a young author’s feelings on the subject.

“A few may read your book, or bits of it, and give you mixed praise and blame, in which, if the latter predominate, give them credit for good intentions, and learn of them. They are your true friends. Only don’t be afraid. Ill-nature is not the especial mark of modern criticism.”

“No! What then?”

“Dishonest motives. You’ll be praised because the critic knows your friends, was at the same university, or has met you at dinner, and likes the look of you. You’ll be damned because you wear a white hat; didn’t see Smith on the other side of Bond Street; employ me as your publisher; or because the reviewer has had indigestion, or is suffering from corns. It’s no use to prolong instances, but——”

“And the ‘S——y Review?’”

“Ha, ha, ha!” roared the old gentleman. “Nobody ever pays any attention to it. It treats every novelist in

the same way, and forgets one year what it has said of the same author the year before. It has ceased to be an authority, and has become a melancholy hodge-podge of bilious expletives. Why it should devote two columns to a book which it asserts, in the end, to be worthless, nobody can understand, except that the reviewer (for critic he can't be called) stands in need of his hebdomadal three pounds ten, and has no more objection to earn his blood-money than a Sheffield unionist. And now, my dear Tom, I must wish you good-morning. Come here again, as soon as you have something to bring with you." Saying which, Mr. Elzevir buried his head once more in his MS., and Tom Staverton walked out.

Under these circumstances he went to work. He drew up half-a-dozen schemes, sketched half-a-dozen heroes and heroines, racked his brain to find incidents by the score, and improbabilities by the hundred. His incidents did not necessarily develop his plot, nor was his hero as consistent in his ordinary conduct as in his devotion to his Amaryllis. He brought to bear all the experience of one and twenty years upon an imagination as free from control as a riderless horse. At the end of three months he had produced a murder, a steeplechase, an elopement, suppers in Peckwater, a bankruptcy, suicide, and the irrepressible marriage. He had been in Belgravia, White-chapel, up Mont Blanc, down the crater of Vesuvius, over the Stelvio, and in a Turkish harem. His hero had crunched pewter pots, drank out of the devil's punch-bowl, fought the American giant, intrigued with a Moravian princess, built a church on Ritualistic principles, and married a bishop's daughter. With such ingredients, could

the novel be a failure? It was a palpable hit ; and when he saw his name in large letters at the back of it, it was the very proudest day of his life.

Tom Staverton was a genius ; the world was charmed, so were the critics, as there was plenty to find fault with. It was the novel of the season ; and old Mr. Elzevir, in the fulness of his heart, made him a handsome addition to his original cheque, and took him home to dinner. His daughter, a very pretty girl, complimented him on his success ; Mrs. Elzevir begged to see him as often as his other numerous engagements would permit ; he poured his sovereigns into the laps of his creditors, and of his mother and sisters. Work flowed in upon him ; the printers waited for copy ; and he could write nothing so ridiculous that somebody or other would not read.

Having once made a start, and some of the good-natured reviewers having stated that this first attempt boded much future excellence, Tom determined upon pursuing the career he had thus auspiciously started upon. So he sought his former patron, Mr. Elzevir.

His reception was kind, even warm ; but he was not congratulated in that unmeasured language of eulogy which every new author loves to hear, and which so many believe to be their due. Mr. Elzevir expressed his satisfaction without great enthusiasm ; and when Tom Staverton ventured to propose another novel, he humm'd and ha'd a little, and finally said, "Well, well, I shall have no objection, but you must do better next time." Now doing better implies a failure of some kind, and for this Tom was by no means prepared.

"Perhaps you will point out, then, any particulars in

which you think I may improve upon my last work?" said Tom.

"It's more like your first work; and, if you like, we'll call it by that name," replied the old gentleman.

"Certainly! oh certainly! Any alteration you wish."

"Have you seen this?" and Mr. Elzevir handed Tom an uncut number of the "S—y Review."

"Not yet;" and Tom began searching under the pages, peeping here and there.

"You'll find it cut at a review of your book. Then, you'll know what to ask for your next work, if I take it."

Tom sat still for ten minutes, and read a couple of columns. As he read, his face assumed various hues—now scarlet, now purple, now pale; now the tears filled his eyes, and anon, a very uncomfortable rigidity seized upon the roots of his hair, as he jumped from his seat, and dashed the paper on the table. "Atrocious! well, I never read such a thing—this is too bad! But he has not read a line of it."

"Ah, never mind! I don't suppose he has? but he knows who you are, and your antecedents. Now, I'll give you my opinion."

"If you please," said Tom, resignedly.

"Your plot must be more carefully unravelled. It isn't quite that you have none; but it's bad, and badly unfolded."

"Perhaps so—it's the first."

"Your characters are good, but very sketchy; they want working out. All people do not talk learnedly, and few wittily."

"I can't make people quite as stupid as they are," said Tom.

"No, certainly not ; but just temper justice with mercy, that will be quite sufficient."

"I have no doubt you are right."

"There's a want of sentiment, too, in the book, Tom, a thing women delight in. And as to love, you know no more about it than the man in the moon."

"I don't think I do."

"You never were in love, or this part of your book would have been much better. No man ever wrote a good love-scene without having been in love, or without being so at the time ; the latter is the better."

"That seems an exacting requirement, difficult to meet."

"Not at all ; go and try to fall in love, and, if you've a sincere wholesome passion, you will very much improve on your new hero and heroine. Read some good genuine criticisms from the 'Edinburgh' and 'Quarterly' of old, and get 'Essays on Fiction,' where you may see Walter Scott and Lytton Bulwer handled by a critic. Now go."

Tom went, bearing with him the old gentleman's well-meant criticisms, and another retaining fee, which he employed as wisely as the last. The fact was, that Mr. Elzevir had taken a fancy to his protégé, and was happy to do Tom a service on his own merits rather than in spite of the demerits of his old acquaintance the guinea-pig.

After a certain length of time, Tom called again upon his patron with a thick brown-paper parcel under his arm, and Mr. Elzevir not being at home, Tom left it.

In a few days he called again, this time with success.

"Will the new novel do, Sir?" said Tom.

"Yes, Tom, it's much better ; of course there are plenty of faults, which you will find out after its publication ; but it's much better—more connected, less sensational, and more carefully put together and developed. And the love ! how the d——I did you manage to throw so much force into that ? Upon my word, it's quite emotional. I declare to you, in the scene where the lovers are called upon to separate, in consequence of the father's misfortunes, I was quite upset. It's really admirable."

"I'm glad you liked it, Sir ; I strove to please you."

"Please me ! Yes ; but it will please the women. How in the world did you manage it ? One would think you were in love yourself."

"Perhaps I am."

"Well, I'm very glad of it. I hope it's a suitable match, Tom. Whose advice was it ? your mother's ? She's a very admirable person."

"Yours, Sir."

"Mine ! What do you mean ? I never advise persons to marry, that's the parson's business. They get the fees, you know."

"Not to marry, but to fall in love. You recollect you told me that was the only way to write well about women, and—and—love, and all that sort of thing," said Tom, blushing like a peony.

"Did I ? well, I believe I did. It is the only way, and so you tried ?"

"I did."

"And, by your writing, I am sure you succeeded."

"I did that, fully," said Tom; "over head and ears."

"And found no difficulty?"

"None whatever."

"And the lady? because, after all, it's hard upon her, you know."

"She fell in love too," said Tom, simpering.

"How the devil do you know that, unless you asked her?"

"I did ask her, and she—well, Sir, she admitted it."

"Humph! well, you see, Tom, you've exceeded your instructions. However, I certainly did advise it, and I hope it's all smooth."

"I can't tell, indeed. There's nothing settled."

"Is it impertinent to ask who it is? I can't help feeling an interest in your affairs, and if I could be of any assistance——"

"You can, Sir, of the greatest—greater than any one."

"Well, who is it, then?"

"Miss Elzevir."

Mr. Elzevir jumped up from his seat, upsetting the ink over the MS. and, having apostrophised "the devil" once more, stood rooted to the spot. Then he sat down again, and desired Tom to sit too.

The conversation that ensued is too long for repetition. It embraced so much and decided so little.

The private meditations of the young man and the old one may be summed up in a few words.

"What an old stupid," said Tom to himself, as he wandered along Bond Street, "not to have guessed what I was driving at! Such an awkward thing to tell a fellow you've been making love to his daughter by his own ad-

vice. He ought to have known it. Hallo! cab! to the Elzevir Station."

"The where, Sir?" says cabby, quite lost.

"Oh, ah! the Waterloo Station, Main Line."

"What an old fool I have been, to be sure! that serves me right for offering advice gratis. What will Mrs. Elzevir say when she knows all about it?"

As the British public have had time to cool, and really find that they can get nothing like blood out of a stone, the interested parties have begun to look at the Ne'erdo-wheel Mine and the Smashem and Endoverend Railway from a more practical point of view. It seems clear that imprisonment, or perpetual expatriation of the directors, will not recoup the buyers for improvident speculation, so that there is every prospect of an arrangement, as favourable as it can be, to the late sufferers, and many a guinea-pig will be allowed to begin life again upon his wife's settlement and his neighbours' bankruptcy. Mr. Brassey Staverton is expected shortly to assist in the celebration of Tom's wedding.





FOR GENTLEMEN ONLY.

THE æsthetics of dress have occupied considerable attention of late, but they have been confined almost entirely to female attire ; and praise or blame has been lavished, not so much in accordance with the facts of the case, as with the peculiar bias of the writer's mind.

When, therefore, we head our article "For Gentlemen Only," we beg our lady readers not to imagine that we are about to disclose the mysteries of that solemn and unprofitable half-hour which we are compelled to pass every day after dinner, left originally to the discussion of politics, but now handed over to ritualism or vintages. Neither is our pen to be of smoking-compartments or horseflesh. We hold out only a warning, that in the "Æsthetics of Dress" more will be found on the subject of male costume than of pearl-powder, crinoline, gold-dust, or pepla. There is as fine a field open for discussion on the first as on the last ; and if we have palpably failed in producing those effects which dress in the softer sex is presumed to aim at, it is certainly not from want of trying. Any lady who imagines that Young England is

indifferent to dress, because he appears slovenly or careless, labours under an error. That very *insouciance* which exhibits itself in shooting-jackets, slouched hats and high-lows, or in any other eccentricities far removed from the scrupulous dandyism of a previous generation, is often the effect of misdirected effort; and would perhaps be less offensive, if it were not too often accompanied by a corresponding disregard of those *soins* which we commonly conceive to belong to the English gentleman. We are far from intimating that this is universal, or nearly so; but if dress has any influence upon manner, or if it be the result of particular feelings, we shall not be far wrong in saying that the rising generation would be none the worse for an increase of *rigueur*.

I suppose few subjects are more popular than this. It has been customary, however, to let ourselves down very easily, and to heap all opprobrium (if such be attached to a special partiality for dress) upon the women. They don't deserve it; and if motives can be tendered as any excuse, they have the fairest apologies to offer. For whom does woman adorn the beauties which Nature has lavished upon her? Not for herself—but for us. For us, who ungratefully tax her with vanity, because we know no higher motives for curling our whiskers and dyeing our hair than to interest ourselves. For what, too, does she look as if she were intended? Surely not to have her clothes tossed on pancake fashion, and to mix this colour with that, or that material with this, until

“Desinat in piscem mulier formosa supernè.”

Besides this, what was the first object in the creation of

the softer sex? That she should be a helpmate to man. And although in the original state in which that institution was ordered there seems to have been little choice for either party, judging by later and less exceptional times, there can be no doubt that self-interest has been bound up in her appearance, and the beauty or propriety of her costume. She goes into the world with her first letter of introduction—a bonnet. She knows that man, even if he admire her intellect, will not fall in love with it. The object that first attracts him is personal appearance; and, humiliating as the confession is to us, that we have not courage or intelligence to love first wit, honesty, truth, devotion or goodness, I suppose few men will deny that they first fell in love with their wife's appearance. A good bonnet, a neat foot and ankle, a pretty figure, a *tout ensemble* made up of this, that, or the other, was the attracting object—the touchstone by which mental graces should be tried: nor can we blame woman for adopting a system which our own predilections have forced upon her.

If, then, our indictment had been true, which I do not think it is, there would have been a fair excuse for it; but our own vanity is palpably without apology on that score. Is it presumed that a woman falls in love at first sight with the clumsy covering which we call clothes? Is it, perchance, that exquisite hat, for which a New Zealander would be at a loss to find an adequate use, unless for beating up eggs, or mixing a salad, which is to carry away Briseis as a captive? or that lovely coat, at present so tight and skimping about the skirts, that it cannot be said whether it best becomes the present fashion of stable

trousers, or the trousers it? Surely, these latter articles of attire, sometimes strapped down, sometimes braced up, sometimes both and sometimes neither, are free of the insinuation of having attracted anybody. Certainly it is none of these: nor can it be our dog-collar that is a badge of such happy servitude, nor our many-coloured or badly-tied neck-cloth, which appears to have no halting-place between a poultice and a halter.

Such being the case, it must be clear that we have no intention of pleasing anyone else by our beauty of adornment, but ourselves by its singularity. That man is, as a rule, idle or indifferent about it, is no more true than that a badly-dressed woman has taken no pains to make herself look as well as she can. So far from dandyism being on the decline, we believe it has made progress, and that in the varieties of costume which obtain nowadays there is palpable evidence of a healthy intention, but a most inadequate effect. In point of fact, we are giving to the rising generation as tender a criticism as the French Committee have given to English manufactures; only that as we involve ourselves in the same universal ruin, we can hardly be credited with a like self-love as its principle. The instinct for dress we believe to be identical in the two sexes; but, as one is urged by a higher motive, it is of a much higher kind, and exhibits itself in a corresponding excellence. A man fails of that refinement and habitual love of grace which pervades woman and her efforts, and wherever he has stepped out of a dignified neutrality has become actively ridiculous or presumptuously ugly.

Since the days of Elizabeth, to which court we revert,

as being eminently suggestive of the truth of our remarks on the vanity of the male sex, we have passed through a few epochs which differ widely from our own, and which lay some claim to distinctions of grandeur and of taste, if not of convenience. No one can well laugh at the slouched hats and feathers, rich furs, magnificent velvets, silk hose, jewelled swords, and russet boots of the courtiers of Charles, though little calculated for displays of activity. The steeple hat, starched ruff, leathern belts, and straight boots of the Puritans, if not handsome, were at least characteristic. The high heels, perukes, long waistcoats and diamond buckles of the Georges, were no incongruous mixture with the formal elegance of the *salons* of the age. We cannot say the same for the present day. It seems to me difficult to say whether a man's dress most outrages convenience or taste. It has one great advantage, cheapness ; which is only nullified by the absurdities of fashion, which demands at least a dozen coats where one would suffice, and will see nothing good in a garment which does not, like Horace's language, come out stamped with the name of a reputable maker. It seems rather a pity that a coat cannot be ordered like a dinner, and paid for according to its intrinsic excellence, or size. But a coat is a coat, and a pair of boots is a pair of boots ; and the cost of the one or the other is not regulated by anything but custom, which has never yet prevailed to lessen, though occasionally to increase the expense.

But I have nothing to do with this, which seems to belong to another part of the subject altogether. What I have to revert to are the incongruities of our present male

costume : pocket, in the present influx of gold and efflux of principle, need not enter into our calculation.

Well ! I take it, the first consideration with man, as with woman, is that clothes should be becoming. Are they becoming ? I take the first object (and it is an object !) which meets my eye as I look out of my library window. I see a man in a tight brown coat and trousers, a black velvet Scotch cap and an eagle's feather, driving a dog-cart. Of course, one's first idea is to laugh : but he is not much more ridiculous than many of us, though a somewhat exceptional case. The cap would look well enough in the Highlands, on somebody's native heather—the coat and trousers even bad on a dummy in Regent Street. What brought them together on the body of the wearer would be difficult to tell. Take the very next person you see—a young gentleman of the middle or upper classes ; at all events regarding himself as a well-dressed man. He intends to be so, and has a right to expect it of his tailor, whose business it now is to carry out his patron's ideas, as far as the strike will let him. To begin at the beginning, he wears what he is pleased to call a pot-hat ; but pots are of various shapes and sizes ; and this is not more of a pot than many other hats which rejoice in other names. It covers the head—so did the Phrygian cap ; so does the Persian fez ; so does the national chimney-pot. This latter preserves the hair, by allowing a free current of air to play about the scalp, which the former does not. It need not be religiously brushed—if that be any advantage—which the latter must be ; and can attain to any great degree of seediness without appearing to detract from the general

appearance of the wearer. The coat which is usually found in company with the pot-hat is a marvellous production. It appears to button neither before nor behind; nine times out of ten, indeed, it parts company about the waist, as if even there the manifest scantiness of its breast and skirts was to be preserved. What an eye for the picturesque the inventor must have had. The pockets have barely room for the jaunty stick of two feet six, which is carried so tastefully in them, now on this side, now on that. The care, indeed, of the dresser has been sometimes sedulously displayed by so disposing the cane as to balance the side effect of the hat; as though one should say that the angle of the one was equal to the angle of the alternate segment of the circle. The trousers completing this part of the toilet are more easily conceived than described, if we say that they appear to have been put on over the head—no feet of the present day being equal to the task of perforating these narrow broadcloth pipes. Verily, this young gentleman has been dressing himself, instead of allowing his tailor to do it for him.

But when quite full dressed—by which I mean in lounging costume for the Row, or Bond Street, St. James's, or Pall Mall—a chimney-pot hat, of very peculiar construction, is substituted for the well-known low-crowned felt. Of course, to be at all in keeping, this should have been of the same proportionate dimensions as the coat and legs. But here an enlarged philosophy has contradicted its previous system; and, as if to counterbalance the feet, which loom large and long—one or both—from below the tight pantaloons, has given a graceful curve to

a broad-brimmed beaver. We are reminded of many things by this graceful waviness: a newly-made bishop, who has changed his hat, but has not yet changed his coat or trousers; the manners of an Irish swindler; a stroke with a flowing cue at billiards; and the line of beauty in the Royal Academy. The whole man is not unlike an ornamented cup and ball; but no man, nor woman, can accuse him of carelessness or indifference to pleasing—himself.

Concealment of defects should be one of the advantages sought for in peculiarity of attire. Perhaps it might be, but for our unwillingness to admit their existence. That garments should be large and loose for such a purpose is manifest, and as a few years ago coats were but sacks and trousers bags, in which the skill of the tailor was mostly shown by one universal fit being made to meet the requirements of everybody, that object appeared to have been attained. It is not so now—unless the irregularities of the human form take shelter in the superior incongruities of costume itself. A notable instance of this occurs in the method of putting on a shawl. When that article of female apparel was fashionable, the method of wearing it in France and England was eminently different. And why? The Englishwoman carried it squarely and stiffly upon the shoulders, holding her head on high, and exhibiting that grandness of contour for which her bust and shoulders are especially remarkable. The Frenchwoman drew the shawl around her narrow shoulders and contracted chest, with twice the elegance and all the deceit. In the one it displayed an excellence; in the other it covered a defect.

With an Englishman's love for athletics, we are surprised that he should ever feel at home in anything tight. There can be no true elegance without freedom of motion. There may be dignity in a tightly-buttoned frock-coat, but not much grace—none of the grace which arises from ease. It is true that for especial purposes especial clothing may be adopted; but the transition from a walking costume *de rigueur* to a suit of flannels is harsh and unnatural. We are accustomed to it, it is true; but they who see us seldom have made pertinent remarks upon the change, not always complimentary to our appearance. The man who walks into the Pavilion at Lord's out of his phaeton, emerges another individual when he takes his place at the wicket or upon the ground. We are a happy people who can so quickly adapt ourselves to the difference; but that does not render it less extraordinary in the eyes of the foreigner. We are right—they are wrong; but that does not make the extremes the less remarkable.

Dress should always be compatible with age and station: we think also with figure and profession. When a man of fifty (*à fortiori* one of seventy) adopts the small collar, brilliant necktie, French pockets, and general swagger of Young England, to say the least of it, he makes himself despicable. When we see the youth clothing himself in the formalities of the old school, he is simply ridiculous. An English gentleman is the gentleman of the world. There is nothing so aristocratic in appearance; and when his manners tally with it, he is "homo ad unguem." But it must be remarked that this compliment has been usually paid to your middle-aged men—

at least, to those who have passed the heyday of youth. They are the men who have lived in an age of well-made trousers and boots, of well-fitting coats, of full-sized collars, and of well-tied cravats. No one ever said this of a billycock-hat, a morning-coat, and of baggy trousers, whose pockets were made to accommodate hands seemingly belonging to the long-armed ape. It was true of that particular age of gentlemen: it is true of those who have preserved their peculiarity of decorum in an age of merciless corruption. There were horsey-men and coaching-men in those days; but they had nothing to do with the men who thought it their duty to preserve the character of the clean-shorn, well-dressed Englishman on the boulevards of Paris, and in the bazaars of Constantinople. We are not talking of comfort. Comfort demands that every man should do and dress as seemeth good in his eyes. We are talking of a prestige, a prestige which we have lost among strangers, and which we show, year by year, less anxiety to maintain. To walk the streets of Paris like a dirty game-keeper is now the right thing to do; to smooth our beards, to swagger with our hands in our pockets, to sacrifice the decency of well-polished boots to the convenience of thick highlows, to puff our short pipes here, there, and everywhere, is the mode with British youth. We are just as good, just as honest, just as essentially cleanly, I make no doubt, but we are not what we were -- the English gentleman, respected and respectable wherever he appeared. When a man of fifty does this, he is like a clown at a funeral.

Of figure and position we have a word to say. Look

at that fat and self-important gentleman bursting with an ambition to look like the neat, well-got-up friend on whose arm he leans. What a miserable object! He looks like a butcher on Sunday, unable to carry off the gentility he affects. Why doesn't he try to pass through life innocuously, in quiet colours and seasonable attire? Is there a more wretched fall from the honest proclamation of labour by a smock frock or a velveteen shooting-jacket than that village suit of shining black which now graces the person of the blacksmith, the keeper, or the day-labourer, when he goes to say his prayers? Is a villanous imitation of the young squire essential to religion, or is it a real penance which clothes the dependant in that unsuitable suit one day out of seven? These are extreme cases, but they prove that since the days of Square, the real fitness of things — garments we should have said—is gone by; of every rank of life the same may be said. We are no advocates for the return of those days when the gentleman was known by his sword alone, or by his right to carry a small fortune upon his lusty limbs; but if the vulgar shopboy could see himself as others see him — aping his master's customers when he has exchanged his apron for the cheap imitation of a West End tradesman—he would waver in his faith that “fine feathers make fine birds.” There is a moral to be drawn from a miserable old beau who is attempting to look like what he once has been; and an equally pertinent, and not less obvious, one in an attempt to seem what a man never has been, and what in the ordinary course of events he never can be. When men ape their superiors externally,

they are very apt to affect their vices too; and if the lower classes add to their own natural deformities the acquired impurities of the classes above them, God help the country of their birth or their adoption!

But modern costume is remarkable for its inconsistencies, and, perhaps, this peculiarity is more striking than even its ugliness or inconvenience. It wants Horace's characteristic of beauty—"Sibi convenientia"—consistency, and in no epoch more than our own. Take an instance or two. Here comes my parson, than whom no better man exists, charitable, patient, wise, a good priest, but a villanous dresser. Of course he has a stiff, straight-collared coat, and a straight waistcoat (which the rest of his dress seems to call for), a tight white neckcloth, and a village-made pair of trousers of black cloth. This is all surmounted by a soft felt hat, which requires nothing but a scarlet and yellow ribbon to represent Mazaroni, or any other Neapolitan brigand. Now where are the decent black silk stockings, breeches, and buckles of sacerdotal attire? where is that clerical hat with its breadth of rim, more suggestive of village respect than Gesler's tyrannical cap? Alas! is it not decorating, at this moment, the empty head of some highly-scented, scantily-coated and breeched *flâneur* on the esplanades of Sussex or of Kent? nor will I say much against the venerable beards of our early reformers, or the handsome Henri Quatres of the early Churchmen, for they did not wear stiff white cravats and dog-collars, straight Quaker-like coats of sober broadcloth, nor hats of modern invention. But I must lift up my voice against the vain inconsistency of this Crimean or

Australian movement on the part of our clergy, who are as far removed in appearance from the Jewish master of Rembrandt, on the one hand, as from the Roman cardinals of Rubens on the other. But a word about beards hereafter.

Now, good simple soul as he is, he really thinks that in that unpretending garb he is escaping observation. He has no idea that his inconsistencies render him more peculiar than the young gentleman who, with ten times his vanity, has had the good taste to make all things meet and appropriate ; that he is ten times as susceptible of remark as his neighbour the artist, another friend of mine : a *bel esprit*, a *littérateur*, who sings his own songs, has an *atelier* to which he will admit you and give you a pipe, and who is now mounting his horse in the most *négligé* of costumes, which he dreamt of during a whole night, and which has occupied a good hour and a half to elaborate this morning. His velveteen knickerbockers, and coat fastened at the neck, his black polished boots, and his slouched hat, well become his pointed beard and moustaches. He may have been dressing after a picture—very likely he has ; his friend Tom Jackall, the great *Punch* contributor, says so : so that we cannot doubt it. All I can wish is, that others would do the same ; not because I wish everybody to wear knickerbockers (we know the resistance there was to a lady patroness of Almack's on the score of legs once, long ago), but that I like to see a fine piece of workmanship, perfect in its parts, better than an unfinished design.

As sportsmen, it is due to the English to observe that their costume in the field is usually perfect. This fitness

of dress for athletics is a drawback in itself to some men. A transition from the strict costume of an ecclesiastic, for instance, to the suit of flannel and the straw hat of a cricketer is too rude, too revolting. The Broad Church might engage in it without demoralisation, but it is inconsistent with a previous habit of the real priesthood. A man who adopts the uncompromising habit of his order *de rigueur* on Monday will not be seen on Tuesday in so unprofessional a garb. None but the Broad Church dare engage in so harmless and so elegant an amusement. There are few dresses so thoroughly successful for a true athlete as "flannels." We omit to speak of the *diableries* of the Zingari and other Bohemians of the "composite orders" of cricketers.

The national costume in which an English gentleman appears to most advantage is that of the hunting-field. Well put on, it is characteristic beyond measure. The broad-skirted scarlet coat, the strong but soft buckskins, whitened by the skill of a practised hand, and the tops, in which the delicacies of apricot jam and champagne are tastefully contrasted with the brilliant polish of the best Day and Martin, bespeak one of a nation of modern Centaurs. Nothing is more graceful than the bright and well-hung spur. Here, too, the condemned hat should play a conspicuous part: your low-crowned felt, or pot-hat, has a poverty-stricken appearance incompatible with an otherwise expensive and handsome dress. Even this we have managed to spoil by the adoption of a beard. Fancy a jockey on Newmarket Heath with this unseemly appendage! A license was once given to cavalry officers to ride over a country in moustaches, and even then they

called to mind the glories of Waterloo rather than of Waterloo gorse. What shall we say then to an ornament which can only exist with propriety in connection with the sports of the backwoodsman, when seen amid the civilisation of Melton !

This is a theme on which we like to dilate, because it is too important to be flung hastily aside, though youth may want the moral courage to correct its improprieties. The space afforded in an article of ordinary length will scarcely suffice for all that might be said upon so prolific a subject. Yet we may have written enough to urge on Young England the necessity of consistency in the great duty of life. Consider, this is your letter of introduction to the world. We have ceased to borrow of woman her furs, her velvets, her chains and jewelry, her point-lace, and her padding. We have lent to her our hats and caps, our boating-jackets and pilot-coats, our high-heeled boots and coloured stockings. She pays us a high compliment ; one not always appreciated in the commercial world, that of borrowing from us in our own coinage to repay us in her own. A silk purse cannot be made out of a sow's ear : it is not, perhaps, desirable that broad-cloth should again be turned to velvet and gold : that youthful gymnasts should resort again to silk and satins. We want something we can throw off quickly and put on quickly, that will stand some wear and tear, since we have taken to camping out in soaking rain, and running and jumping. The exigencies of the climate are better served, perhaps, than they were long ago ; and the tennis-court and the cricket-field better attended and more fully patronised than when all our athletes were to be found

among the country gentlemen and noblemen—the Ansons, the Beauclercs, the Kennedys, the Rosses and the Osbaldestons. The London apprentice even takes his part, as well as the lawyer, the trader, the shopkeeper, and the accountant. We want convenience for our more active life, and perhaps we have it, only let us have consistency too.

We may close these fugitive suggestions on the philosophy of male attire by a slight sketch of a man of fashion of thirty years ago, whose dress of its peculiar class excited in his day so great an admiration as to defy all rivalry. Why, says a very clever dramatist, have we had no plays attempting an imitation of Shakespeare? Because, we reply, he sets all imitation at defiance. No man willingly seeks failure. So it was with Count d'Orsay. No man copied him: for his was a consistency which required courage and talent, and anything short of such consistency was felt to be a failure. From the crown of his head, which, by-the-way, was a Lincoln and Bennett perfect in shape, to the sole of his feet, where his wonderfully cut trousers met by means of small gold chains, he was the most perfect specimen of a fashion all his own. It was the dignity of dandyism which distinguished him. His jewelry, sparse but perfect, his coat handsomely thrown back, or buttoned across his chest, alike fitted him and nobody else: his shirt wristbands turned back over his sleeves, of beautiful linen, were as smooth and unruffled as if they had been made of steel. His gloves were spotless as his linen. His cab, his horses, his groom, were all of the same pattern. In all his pursuits he was the same: and whether he drove or rode from the Marble

Arch to the Statue, or met the stag-hounds at Ascot, he was unapproachable in the fastidiousness of costume. The style was by no means universally popular even amongst those who could have followed in his wake with a prospect of success ; but it had this great advantage over every other of the day, that it was perfect of its kind. A man who dresses in this way might be immoral, or indifferent to the claims of his tradesmen ; but he could be no more forgetful of the duties which he owes socially to the other sex, or to his own, than he could forget the duties of the toilet at such times as the customs of good society make them necessary.





COUSIN FANNY ; OR, A NEW YEAR'S GIFT.

SOMEBODY says, "One half of the world doesn't know how the other half lives." If this were wholly true, there would be nothing very remarkable in the fact, except that it would prevent us from lightening some burthens without increasing our own. But, like other aphorisms, it is only partially true—true in particular cases ; and in a world so full of kindly sympathies, to say nothing of lynx-eyed curiosity, men do practically know (quite as far as is good for them) the manner in which, and the extent to which, their neighbours' bread is buttered, as well as their own. One half of the world does not know how I live : it does not concern itself with the struggle that is now going on between me and the clerk of the Income Tax Commissioners, to get him to do an act of justice without exposing all the little "ins" and "outs" of my family circle. It does not know me. But if it buries its head in the ground like the ostrich, and therefore imagines that I do not know it, that half of the world is very much mistaken. I know it very well. I know how it lives. I have cognizance of

its shifts and quirks, its wish to appear better than it is (which is laudable enough in some sense), and its terrible failure to do so. A man ought to put on his best appearance before the world, just as much as he ought to put on a clean shirt on Sunday, if he only indulges in that luxury now and then. However, to make a long story short, I'll tell you what one half of the world lives by—it lives by gambling.

Now, I have no wish to frighten the other portion of society into a belief that that half is any worse than their own: nor to conjure up visions of cards, dice, skittles, and Newmarket Heath, although they have held a prominent position in the occupations of the world of late years. But there is scarcely a profession, obligation, or responsibility undertaken that does not involve some love of speculation, and without which life would part with one of its most wholesome charms. There is the farmer, the doctor, the merchant, the tradesman, who calculate on sunshine] or rain, on health, on scarcity or plenty, on demand or supply; and even the Church, which speculates on the life of that tenacious incumbent, who has already made a clear fifteen per cent. by the sale of his incumbency, to which he still manages to hold on like a limpet. If I know a state tending directly to apoplexy in this world, it is thirty thousand pounds Consols so tied up that you can't get at it, or a handsome annuity not to be increased or reduced by exertion in business of any kind whatever.

If you, oh reader, think as I do on this subject, go with me in my sympathy for the hero of this little story, who made a great ass of himself, it is not to be denied,

but, like a French murderer, with extenuating circumstances.

About two years ago (rather less, as it happened in the early spring) there suddenly appeared upon the turf and the town one Mark Singleton. He would have taken a very long time, with his attributes, to have attained notoriety; but Mark seems to have been one of those geniuses that go straight to the point,—and he certainly selected the only road open to such genuine stupidity. There were a few enquiries at first as to *who he was*; but they merged in a very short time into the more practical one of *what he had*. As this latter obtained a satisfactory answer, he found himself famous almost before he could have expected it. He achieved notoriety from a combination of promising circumstances.

His appearance was very much in his favour. He looked rather like a fool, and very much like a gentleman: two points of the greatest consequence to those with whom his reputation was to be made. The first would enable him to be plucked by the fashionable gamesters and out-at-elbow gentlemen who accosted him so readily, and the second would secure the process without the necessity of blushing for their victim. Mark Singleton was perfectly presentable, though nobody knew who he was. He was tall, and thin, and fair, and possessed that *blasé* look of dissipation, which is eminently gentlemanly when natural, and eminently vulgar when assumed. He had an irreproachable hack, a very quiet but well-appointed brougham, and a pair of phaeton horses which, had he not assumed to be somebody would have been almost *outré*.

His little dinners were exceedingly good, which gained for him the honour of frequent society : and there are, perhaps, no more critical judges of a *recherché* feed than they who have some difficulty in finding one at home. He was sparing of nothing, with an object in view ; and there is no more indomitable tempter than vanity. In no long time his lodgings became crowded with men about town ; men having names well known in St. James's, and better known than trusted east of Temple Bar. There was play, fast and furious ; and the I O U's which changed hands, and the pieces of accommodation paper which went from one to the other, would almost have papered the room. Somehow or other, whatever high-sounding names were found to have transferred themselves from the peerage to the paper on one side, the name of Singleton figured on the reverse of almost every one. They said it made the time pass pleasantly, these little lansquenet and écarté parties ; the endorsement of one's name at the back of these little papers is calculated to make it go fast.

No wonder, then, that Mark Singleton became popular with a limited set. He was so indeed ; but he soon found out that his lodgings in St. James's Street were not as boundless as Newmarket Heath, and that there was but one unerring road to universal popularity. For Mark had determined upon knowing all the dukes, marquises, earls, and barons of the peerage, reserving to himself the right of patronising a few of the best of the commoners, as occasion might offer.

It came to pass that at this very time a few overstocked racing studs were to be offered for public sale : and the

opportunity not occurring above once every three weeks, it was seized upon by Mark, with the aid of his friends, for embarkation in his new line. The magnificent prices which he gave had two results: it brought him first into rivalry, and then into contact with the great patrons of the turf, and afforded fresh occasion to the sporting press to unkennel his antecedents. It was remarkable how pregnant of conjecture the Prophets and Own Correspondents were, and how redolent of flattery. He was an Australian millionaire, a natural son of the Grand Lama of Tibet, a Cornwall miner, a great landowner from New Zealand, a great grandson of Mississippi Law, and a son of a ticket-of-leave convict who had realised a million of money by prosperous diggings. What liberality! what taste! what pluck! The Marquis of Carabas was a fool to him. He was an honest, straightforward sportsman, an English gentleman, who paid his losses in an honourable, open-handed manner (which he did, seeing he couldn't get credit); and had stumped the Leviathan, by taking, in one bet, his offer of two hundred to fifteen in thousands against Mumbo Jumbo for the next year's Derby, for which event he had opened a book.

Now it may be as well, while Mark goes on filling his book, and feeding his barons, indulging in unlimited hazard, and backing the dead ones, to state who and what he was. He was neither the son of the Grand Lama nor of an economist, but a simple English gentleman, very simple, who had come to town with the small accumulations of a few thousands left him by an old maiden aunt, and a little estate in Wales, fortunately so tied up that he could not get at it. He was consigned

to a respectable old uncle, who had made a large fortune as a stock-jobber, and who despised the fine friends of his nephew as much as they would have despised him, had they made his acquaintance. Mark Singleton kept Silas Jones safely in the background. It is true that beyond old Jones he had no one from whom he could expect sixpence, or to whom he could look for advice; and as he hated the turf, and what he called fine-weather friends, Mark Singleton was not going the way to conciliate the old gentleman.

"Look you here, Mark," said he, at the end of about four months, and a day or two before the celebrated Derby: "I see the *Gallier's Gazette* has been busy with your name, and that you've already spent a fortune in buying a pack of devils that you can't ride, and which are no use to anybody but the swindlers who live by other people's folly. It's nothing to me; I've made my money in a straightforward way, by Canada trunks and the Greek loans; but as sure as my name's Silas Jones, you'll come to grief."—That was old Jones's view of all turf transactions. His friends said he had made his money by rigging the market; be that as it may, he had made it; and having got it, he thought himself justified in offering advice.—"However, it's your business, not mine; so now we may as well go up stairs." This might be called an evening at home.

Now, I have my opinion of old Jones: not a bad fellow, but rather a humbug. He hated the turf, and what his nephew called society, not for its vices, but because he didn't understand them; just as a man might hate Canada trunks and Greek loans, without

rhyme or reason ; but that did not hinder him from having a very pretty daughter, and an opinion of his own. We have heard the opinion—now we'll look at the daughter.

Fanny Jones was an exceedingly good-looking girl. She had fair brown hair, handsome gray eyes, a small, straight, well-formed nose, and a mouth and teeth that in themselves would have redeemed almost any face from ugliness. She had a tall, rounded figure, free from *embonpoint*, but handsomely covered with a clear, pearly skin, through which the blue veins coursed each other up and down in a fine, thoroughbred, life-like fashion. Like her father, she too had a will of her own, without which women are only automata, and better fitted for a Turkish seraglio than for an English home. She might have been a duchess, an English stock-jobber's daughter as she was. She had sat long enough at the top of her father's table to give her an assured and confident manner ; and as she had profited by the accomplishments and luxury which an ample fortune had provided for her, under the charge of a perfectly competent chaperone, Fanny Jones might be considered something more than an eligible *parti*. But she had her weak point, too ; she had been fool enough to fall in love with her cousin, Mark Singleton.

Yes ! and what made the matter worse was, that the deeper and deeper he got into the mire (and he was not many months before he was up to his neck) the more closely she clung to him. The more her friends abused him—and they did so in pretty round terms—the more numerous his escapades became, the deeper his dealings

with the Jews, the more bills he backed, the more stupid matches he made, and the more frequently he lost his money (which were so pleasantly recorded by the penny-aliners), the more she thought of him, and the more she longed for the opportunity of accompanying her Cousin Mark to that very retributionary, though somewhat apocryphal, gentleman whither he was said to be hurrying; not that she thought so for one moment. She no more doubted her capability of checking his downward course, than she doubted the capability of Shakespeare's Cliff to check the encroachments of the sea.

"I don't agree with you at all, Sir," said she to her father, with heightened colour and flashing eyes: "I don't agreed with you at all. If you had not discouraged him from coming here, by abusing his friends and his pursuits, he wouldn't have been half so bad." And as Jones had but one idol besides the Stock Exchange, and that was his daughter, he attempted a rather weak defence.

"Abused his friends, my dear?"

"Yes; you called his friend Carabas a swindler; and said a man might as well have got up behind Aldgate Pump, whatever that means. I'm sure there's as much slang in the City as there is on the turf."

"I meant that he backed Lord Carabas's bill for three thousand, when he might have known that he never had a shilling but what his brother allowed him."

"He did it to oblige a friend," said Fanny, dauntlessly.

"Yes, and had to pay," replied Silas, so far triumphantly.

"Well, it wouldn't have been much obligation if he had not."

"Upon my honour, my dear Fanny, this is too much ! I should like to know what it is you wouldn't have him do. He gets into the hands of a pack of aristocratic sharpers——"

"That's his misfortune."

"And loses six or seven thousand, at least, upon the Derby."

"It's not his fault that Mumbo Jumbo went amiss."

"He buys most extravagant and useless horses, which never win a race ; he lives most extravagantly with people who only laugh at him behind his back——"

"He'll find that out for himself in time."

"He backs bills for all the young roués about town, with no prospect of their being met, and borrows money of the Jews at forty per cent. on his note of hand."

"You might have prevented that by lending it to him yourself."

Upon which old Jones jumps up in a perfect fury, upsets his tea over the drawing-room carpet, and retires in dudgeon to his own room to smoke a cigar, cursing the stupidity of women in general, and Fanny in particular.

If Fanny Jones had simply stuck to her text, that Mark Singleton had never had a home, nor any encouragement to make one, without entering into these details, she would have been not far from right. As it was she exhibited a degree of infatuation which made her case worse, and determined her father in a very perverse opinion, which has a parallel only in a too hasty universal affirmative of David—that "All women are fools."

There is no doubt that Mark Singleton might have been more delicately handled ; for he was possessed of one quality which somewhat resembles a good mouth in a horse—he was fond of women. He was amenable to woman's influence, as a horse with a good mouth and a well-placed head bends to the gentle suggestions of a light hand. But unfortunately a home was just what he had not—a lodging he had with a latch-key, but that did not keep him out of mischief ; and when his uncle's door was virtually closed against him, he only went from bad to worse. He often thought of his Cousin Fanny ; but not being very strong-minded, and having a sufficiency of courage with much vanity, he solaced himself with the excesses which procured for him, on sufferance, the society in which he delighted. It was so flattering to see his name in the *Gallopers' Gazette*, or the *Touter's Life*, in company with Carabas and his Henchmen, and to think that his Cousin Fanny would see it too. He loved Fanny very much ; but he knew very little if he imagined that it gave her the slightest satisfaction.

It took just about eighteen months to disabuse Mark Singleton's mind of the vulgar prejudice he had embraced in favour of good society. He tried hard to persuade himself that he had done a clever thing in wasting his thousands in high life, and that he must be repaid for the outlay some time or other. As he went down in the world he found out his mistake. When he had no more money nor credit, the lodgings in St. James's lost their attractions. Carabas no longer called for him in his phaeton, Dinewell no longer asked him to his little suppers, and Bill Stamp positively pretended not to see

him while walking with the young Duke of St. Argent in Bond Street. "Done already?" said Carabas; "what's become of his money?"

"Never had any," said Dinewell, "and the place in Wales is nothing but a keeper's lodge."

"Started our kites, and flew 'em till old Absolom wouldn't find the wind any longer," said Stamp, who had been indebted to him on more than one occasion; and, like the prodigal son, Mark Singleton would gladly have gone home again, only he didn't know how he should be received. In this state of uncertainty he lived on the husks for a few months more, and if it hadn't been for the Jews the living would have been intolerable.

There are some men with whom misfortune, or the result of their own tomfoolery, which they call misfortune or disappointment, acts most beneficially. It acts upon their moral vision like couching, and exposes their own previous blindness, and the insincerity of their friends. It shows them the wrong road by which they have come, sometimes without pointing out the right one by which they are to go. This was just the case with Mark. He knew he was all wrong, but for the life of him he did not know how to get right.

Now what a chance for old Jones if he had but known it, only he was much occupied about his own affairs. Canada trunks and Candiote loans were down. It would have taken a very long time, and a great many conversations with Fanny, such as we have detailed, to have convinced this old gentleman that he had been at all to blame. One thing, however, had a great effect upon him: Fanny lost her appetite. She did not appear to get reconciled

to her cousin's continued absence, or to her father's continued abuse of him. She was pale, and out of sorts ; wanted tone, the doctor said, whatever that means. She was nearly blown off her legs at Brighton without any benefit, except that of refusing Captain Swash Buckler of the Heavies, and parboiled at Torquay. Her father had never suffered yet from loss of appetite himself, and decided (the case being a bad one) upon consulting Dr. McGrowl, the most eminent physician in London. He took his fee, and transferred the case to McBleat, the most promising opinion on heart complaint of the present day.

All this perplexed Jones very much ; so he went off to his business to beguile the time ; and on his road he met with an adventure which bore fruit. Passing a somewhat obscure street in the neighbourhood of the Bank, Silas Jones caught sight of Mark Singleton coming out of a house not unknown to City men, and amongst others to old Jones himself. It was the office of Levi Absolom, Esq., the great finance agent and bill-discounter. It was a bad thing to be in his hands as a rule ; but it was said that you might be in worse. If he took your clothes off your back he left you your skin ; and he had been known to leave a victim a five-pound note to start him afresh. His dealings were extensive, and of late years he had been a harbour of refuge to bankrupt nobility. As the old gentleman sat in his office pondering over his daughter's obstinate preference, and the much-altered appearance of his nephew from the dashing young fellow he had known a year and a half ago, it occurred to him that he might make enquiries, at all events, as to the

real state of affairs. It was no use to look in the sporting papers : they had long ago washed their hands of a lame duck, whom they had once mistaken for a swan ; but who, like other things and persons, hit the happy medium, and turned out only a goose. It was no use to go to the young City men. The only answer he could have got would have been the very vague one of "utterly done," "baked to a turn," "can't show." "I'll go to Absolom myself," thought the old man ; "he knows, and I think he'll tell me. If he's not very deep, we may pull him out of the scrape between us." So he sent for a cab, to the detriment of some bargains in Californians, and presented himself at the Jew lawyer's house.

Levi had a great respect for a man who had never "done a bit o' stiff," except in the way of business, and received Mark's uncle with great cordiality. There might be an *arrière pensée* touching a bill which he held for one thousand five hundred, but he did not let it appear.

"And you know that he doesn't owe any more?" said the old gentleman, after having got through the crust pretty well without alarming the Jew.

"I know because I've had the settlement of Mr. Singleton's affairs. He came to me, because he hadn't got anybody else to do it for him. He's a gentleman every inch of him; and if he was to begin again to-morrow, I'd take his acceptance at three months without asking any questions."

"And what's he living on now?"

"The income of a small estate in Wales. He's paid

every farthing of eighteen thousand in the last twelve months, and vows he'll never touch a dice or back a horse again."

"Have you got anything out against him?"

"Will you take it up if I have?"

"Perhaps I may. How much is it?"

"Nothing to you, but a good deal to him. One thousand five hundred. Let's see" — here he refers to a memorandum book — "due the 1st of January, New Year's Day."

"Now, Absolom, what's to be done with him? Let him go abroad?"

"Not if you don't want to ruin him outright. There's nothing like a small French town for that. Nobody to speak to, nothing to do, but billiards, low gambling, and brandy and water. An angel would go to the dogs in Boulogne in a twelvemonth."

"But what am I to do with him here?"

"Keep him here and look after him. Give him something to do."

"But he won't do it."

"How do you know? You never tried. He's a gentleman, every inch of him, and he isn't half such a fool as he looks."

"And what will you take for the bill? Come, be reasonable, Absolom."

"Well, so I will. I'll take one thousand two hundred down, and that's only with the hope of accommodating you some day or other. Don't get a shilling out of it. Send me the cheque and you shall have the bill." The old gentleman looked at the Jew, nodded

good humouredly, buttoned up his pocket, and walked out.

When Mr. Jones went home that day he broached the subject of his nephew's debts; but in a much better temper, as Fanny thought; and it was not long before she told him so.

"The boy's utterly ruined; and all from that taste for gambling; he's lost everything except that little Welsh property, which he can't make ducks and drakes of, fortunately for him. I wish I'd persuaded him to go into some steady business or profession."

"It's not too late to do so now, papa, I should think."

"He's nothing to begin upon. His capital's gone."

"You've enough for both." Upon which Mr. Jones said, "humph," buttoned his pockets for the second time to-day, kissed his daughter, and went off to smoke.

From that day, by slow degrees, Mark Singleton again became a guest of his uncle. Nobody knew how it happened. He came in from his club for an hour in the evening, then to dinner occasionally: and before Christmas he was a morning visitor to his cousin. The old gentleman watched him narrowly, talked on subjects of business, was glad to find that he was not deficient in capacity, and was thoroughly sick of idleness. As for Mark himself, as he wandered home at night, he cursed his unlucky stars, and thought how happy he might have been if he had only known how to set about it. "If I had a home, and an income worth her acceptance, I'd offer it to Fanny; but I can't do that; and I see but little chance of it with that confounded bill of old

Absolom's. Of course he'll renew, but it must end somewhere. After all, with all his notions about the turf, he's worth a dozen of Carabas and his friends; ill-conditioned beggars." I need scarcely say his thoughts had turned to his uncle.

He ate his beef and his pudding at Christmas at his uncle's, of which there was neither, by-the-way, on the table; but it was not a very merry Christmas to him. The unfeeling Jones and the friends he invited were, as Mark thought, noisily bumptious and vulgarly indifferent to their Christmas bills. Fanny was provokingly bitter, and did something to make him forget his grievance.

The five days, with his acceptance hanging over him, did not take long to go, and the morning of the New Year, 1868, found him vacillating between the Dover boat and a disclosure to his uncle. "Hang the boat! I'll go to the old man; he's been good to me lately, and I'll make a clean breast of it. I suppose something can be done, if I'm to be a beggar for the rest of my life." Saying which he walked out of his bed-room into his sitting-room, and found his letters.

From the envelope of the first there dropped a cancelled acceptance for one thousand five hundred pounds, and on a slip of paper was written this very characteristic offer from his uncle:—

"MY DEAR MARK,

"I beg your acceptance of a New Year's Gift. If you have done gambling, and would like to work for your livelihood, come to me and I'll put you in the way.

To-day's a holiday, but don't be later than ten to-morrow in Capel Court.

“Yours affectionately,
“SILAS JONES.”

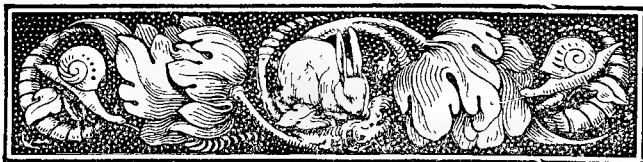
The life that Mark had been leading for the few last months was not miscalculated to give him a taste for a high stool in his uncle's counting-house. To walk about the streets discarded by the only friends whom you have yourself not discarded, dodging from one side of Bond Street to the other, through mud and carriages, to avoid the possible scrutiny of a creditor, to be cut off from the resources and amusements for which you have been qualifying at a heavy sacrifice, is the less pleasant alternative of the two. Therefore our friend Mark presented himself at the specified time, and proceeded to regain the confidence of his uncle, which he had well-nigh lost, and the means of making a proposal to his daughter in return for the one which his uncle had made to him. He proved to be not half such a fool as he looked ; and a week or two later Silas Jones gave him some admirable precepts, backed by his own example :

“It won't take you a very long time to learn your business, Mark,” said the old man one morning, “and I'm happy to hear that you've given up that intolerable habit of gambling. If you'd been a steady fellow by this time you might have had an opportunity of buying a bear of Abyssinians to the tune of some few thousands on your own account ; and if everything goes on right, if the mules can't get water, and there's a scarcity of labour in the camp, with a sharp attack of malaria, and a badly

managed commissariat, egad, Sir, you might turn a pretty penny! Saying which old Jones gave his desk a bang with one hand, and his pocket a bang with the other, and went on 'Change.

I don't know whether Mark Singleton did buy a bear of Abyssinians, or whether these little accidents will turn up, but I rather think it likely. At least he told me yesterday that he'd given up gambling, and made it "all square" with his Cousin Fanny.





FROM YEAR'S END TO YEAR'S END.

T was a fine open season, just one month before Christmas-day. The trees were cleared of their foliage, and the hedgerows of their leaves ; but the weather was genial, and soft winds and a cloudy atmosphere held out to the sportsman a promise which was not destined to be fulfilled. The Earl of Rosendale was an admirable sample of the English nobleman and the British sportsman. Few men looked so well, behaved so well in all relations of life, or wore such perfect leathers and tops. His legs were made for them,—long, thin, straight ; and his back was like his legs. The manner in which his long black coat, with its wide skirts, hung upon the earl's hips, was a marvel to the admirers of good dressing. Four days a week in the winter it was exchanged for a stronger and a broader one of scarlet. The earl's manner was as irreproachable as his appearance. His servants worshipped him, his children admired him, his tenants loved him, and his equals—well, his equals were so few and far between, that it is difficult to appreciate their feelings, if they had any. To say truth, his besetting sin was family pride.

Rosendale Castle, like other Castles of Indolence, was opened to the world out of the season. As one of the best sportsmen in the county, and the largest subscriber to the county hounds, Lord Rosendale felt it to be incumbent upon him to fill his house with hunting-men during Christmas. The only condition, implied rather than expressed, was that each guest must be provided with a stud, for which accommodation was found in the village. There were exceptions to this rule occasionally, but such were seldom acknowledged by the guests, and might consist of a *savant*, or a Frenchman, who fell to the lot of the countess and her daughters to entertain.

Lord Glendower, the earl's eldest son, came down of course. He was a hard, well-knit man, of middling stature, always with a glass in his eye, and an unpleasant witticism at hand for a friend or an enemy; it scarcely mattered which. He was a better class of Jack-Pudding in the London clubs, and was unpopular in proportion to the great extent of his acquaintance. There was a good-natured duke, stout, gray, and of the gamekeeper pattern, riding to cover on a fat cob, and mounting the sedatest of hunters, when his jacket and gaiters not unfrequently led the shirkers to victory. There was a formidable marquis, the *parti* of the season, an innocent, unpretending person in reality, who would have been cheerful enough had he not been made to feel the necessity of marrying thus early in life. Wherever there were women it put him in a false position; and the earl had three daughters, two of whom were still unmarried. The third, to be sure, the Lady Evelyn, was scarcely out; and the Marquis of Cocky-leeky would not commit such a sole-

cism as to fall in love with the younger sister, while Lady Margaret Caradoc remained single. There were two or three rising politicians of fifty, a couple of Guardsmen, the duchess, some younger Lady Marys, and distinguished commoners, and one or two poor but highly-connected hangers-on of the family. Lord Rosendale was eminently distinguished by consideration for poor relations.

"Did you say Jack Bulstrode was coming to-morrow, Glendower?"

"If he doesn't break his neck on the road," said his lordship, making a cannon, and calling the game. "He's going to hunt his way here."

"Why the deuce should he break his neck?" rejoined the marquis, formidable for his matrimonial qualifications, chalking his cue: "why the deuce should Bulstrode break his neck? He's the best man to hounds I ever saw in my life; there's no more chance of his breaking his neck than—than—" here the marquis holed the red ball.

"Than you have," replied Glendower, screwing his glass into his eye, and chuckling. The marquis was not famous for risking his neck after hounds. I think that a man's means of enjoyment in other ways ought to exempt him from such a necessity.

"Where are the hounds to-morrow?" enquired George Sherringhame, a handsome little baronet in a Lancer regiment, and excellent at all things, coaching included. "I suppose we can get to them from here? I shall go any distance if Bulstrode's coming here afterwards; he's the very best company——"

"Too good for you, George, over a country," interrupted Glendower again; "you'll be more at home with him in the phaeton on the road. However, we can all go. It's Timberfield to-morrow; only twelve miles. We'll have the drag if George will promise not to upset us."

"I should think Glen was reserved for another fate," said Sherringhame. "You'd better mind your game, Glen," added he, after a pause; "the marquis is well ahead—thirty-seven to twenty-six. I'll lay you twenty to fifteen." "Done," said the other, and the game proceeded. What the result might have been had Lord Glendower reserved his powers for billiards instead of chaff, I can't say; as it was, he lost.

"I say, Sherringhame, who *is* Bulstrode? Our people don't know him." The question was propounded *sotto voce* by Captain Porter, of the Coldstreams, whose grandfather had made a million in a gin distillery, and whose grandson was dispensing it in a manner which entitled him to the *entrée* to the very best circles; a great deal of it found its way into the pockets of Sharper, Pulham, and the Leviathan ringmen, who hailed young Porter's advent as a star of the first magnitude, and worshipped accordingly the rising grandson. Lord Glendower, indeed, called him, "the Star from the East," in consideration of the locality of the great distillery.

"Who is Bulstrode?" I should think the question could never before have occurred to Sir George Sherringhame, or to anybody else, excepting to the mammas, who thought their daughters in danger from his fascinations. Of course, Lady Rosendale need not be numbered among

them. Jack Bulstrode was such an universal favourite, so exceedingly handsome, so clever, so good-humoured, so perfect a gentleman to all appearance, and such a thoroughly good fellow from beginning to end, that nobody ever had considered it a question worth answering. He was in a good cavalry regiment, had a fair income for a bachelor, kept a small but very good stud, was to be found in the best houses during the shooting season, occasionally backed a friend's horse, and played as good a rubber for eighteenpence as if he had been playing for thousands. Once known not to be "detrimental," he became the pet of the old ladies; and Heaven only knows what he was to the young ones: he never enquired.

Jack's first appearance in a house like Rosendale under ordinary circumstances need have created no sensation. He had been asked by Lord Glendower because he thought he might be useful to his mother in entertaining her guests, and to his father and the men in shooting pheasants and entertaining them. Any thought of Jack Bulstrode's pleasure never crossed Lord Glendower's mind. I am afraid we shall see that self-denial was not one of that gentleman's many virtues.

When a man has only a given number of pages, the description in detail of a heroine (*à fortiori* of a hero) is a luxury which he ought to forego. Of late years they have all been pretty much alike: golden hair, lovely red and white skins, compressed lips, gleaming blue eyes, lithe and sinewy limbs, and a general boa-constrictor cast of countenance for the destruction of the unwary. Now some of these charms belonged to Jack, but none of

them to Lady Evelyn Caradoc. It is impossible to resist a certain impression (at least, I have found it so), for good or bad, when the name or qualities of any particular person, unknown to you, has been constantly canvassed in your presence. For a few days past Lady Evelyn had heard of nothing but Jack Bulstrode, or Captain Bulstrode; what he had done, what he had said, what was his weight, what was his height; and two ladies at table had almost quarrelled about the colour of his eyes. They both agreed in one thing, that they were the handsomest eyes in London. Madame la Duchesse de la Porte St. Martin, the earl's eldest daughter, said they were so in Paris last season; and M. le Duc was most anxious again to make the acquaintance of the Englishman who had won the La Manche Steeplechase for him on a French bred horse. It is not too much to say that Lady Evelyn's curiosity had reached a pitch not far from partiality, by the time he arrived.

"My dear Evelyn, how you do talk of this man!" said Miss Nettleship, a lady of great propriety, now occupying a semi-official position in the house as half-governess and half-companion.

"You told me I ought to pick up as much as possible from the conversation at the table, as I was out of the schoolroom now, and I've heard of nothing but Jack Bulstrode every day since Glendower came down, so I can't help talking about him; besides, Netty dear, where's the harm?"

Miss Nettleship exercised a judicious reticence in not answering the question.

Timberfield Gorse was a crack meet, and if Jack Bul-

strode wanted to make the most of his time in the shires, he could not have done better than send on his things with his horses to Rosendale, and propose to have a gallop on the way to the castle. He was asked to have a month's hunting, including the Christmas week. The morning was fresh, and light clouds scudded over the sky, somewhat higher than heretofore. It was bright for a hunting morning, but exhilarating enough on the top of the drag, with Georgy Sherringhame for dragsman, and Glendower's anecdotes, which quite kept pace with the team. Lady Evelyn was inside, under the guardianship of her sister the duchesse, who had expressed such unqualified admiration for the expected stranger.

When they reached the meet there was a goodly muster. The huntsman touched his cap from the middle of his hounds, as did five-and-twenty servants riding and leading their masters' horses on every side. The drag was soon surrounded, and the more fortunate among the sportsmen drew near to offer their congratulations to the inside passengers, who were waiting only till the last moment to mount. Amongst them came Captain Bulstrode.

"I'm glad you are here, Captain Bulstrode; you are expected at the castle to-day."

And then the duchess presented the captain to Lady Evelyn. They both bowed, and they both blushed, and the captain was about to say something, when the drag moved on, and the ladies' horses were brought to the door of the carriage. The crowd, and among them Jack Bulstrode, moved aside, and the hounds trotted on. "C'up, Gameboy; drop it, Cruiser; get to him!"

said the whip. Even the duchess and her sister were forgotten in the excitement of the moment.

"Why, Evelyn," said the duchess, laughing, "so you know this 'beau cavalier,' it seems?" after they had ridden side by side for a short distance.

"Yes, I know him; but I didn't know that that was the Jack Bulstrode that has been the sole subject of conversation among the men for the last week. I never heard his name, but I saw him the year before last at a Christmas party at Lady Kinderbatch's. He was so kind: he showed the magic lantern to us all, did some conjuring tricks, and danced with some of us, though I don't think it could have been much fun for him."

Presently Jack Bulstrode joined them. He reminded Lady Evelyn of the child's party, and said some pleasant little nothings about her alteration, but his perfect recollection of her. He chatted gaily enough about the hounds, the country, the people (with whom he seemed to have a very liberal acquaintance). To tell truth, he began to be so involved in the intricacies of memory and knowledge combined, that he had almost forgotten the only thing which he came out to think of—the hounds.

At that moment there was a "Hallo, away!" which recalled him to himself. The Duchesse de la Porte St. Martin joined her sister at the top of the gorse, and they stood together watching the field as it became "small by degrees and beautifully less" in the vale below. Then they turned round, and trotting gently on, rode for a point; but the hounds were gone, and, by their groom's advice, they turned their heads towards home. Lady Evelyn was more silent than usual. She well remembered

the handsome good-natured fellow who helped to amuse her and her companions. If not derogatory to her distinguished position as a young lady of fifteen, it must be confessed that she had thought of him more than once, and earl's daughters are but flesh and blood after all. But she had never ventured to talk about him, and to this simple fact may be attributed that of not knowing his name. The duchess, too, talked about him as a person well known and well received, and for a Christmas party, with tableaux vivants and private theatricals, the very best person in the world. "You should just see him act a lover on the stage: it's perfection." I dare say Lady Evelyn thought it a pity his talents in that line should be so wasted.

By the time the hounds were out of the gorse (alas, for man's ruder nature !) Jack Bulstrode had forgotten Lady Evelyn's very existence. A short check, just after finding, as they flung round to the right, brought our hero to the front, and from that moment he never left them. The pace over the grass was what it sometimes is with the Pytchley: to ride over them was impossible, to keep them in sight was as much as the best man could do. Lord Rosendale himself, whom we have hitherto overlooked, was wide of the hounds, down wind, on a thoroughbred one. Jack Bulstrode and Sir George Sherringham were on the other side, within twenty yards of one another, taking their paces almost in their stride, and both riding their horses as if they began to feel they were in for a good thing. On the inside of all, on the lawn side, rode the huntsman, and at intervals Lor Glendower and the best men.

"Who's that in front, on the upper side, Charles?" said his lordship to the huntsman, as he caught him at a gate, which he swung open, but which shut again before any one behind could get through.

"Can't say, my lord. Come from Coventry in a fly this mornin' with Captain Vansittart; but he's a beggar to go."

The field was scattered in every direction; and those who persevered were being hopelessly left in every stride. No check of sufficient length occurred to give the shirkers a chance. The country had been most uncompromising in its severity, and the gates not half so accommodating as usual. At the end of forty-three minutes a large fallow, in which was a plough and a team of horses, gave the fox a ghost of a chance.

"Well, Georgy," said the captain, "have you got another puff in you?"

"Another ten minutes at this pace, and I'm done. Look at the earl, looking for his second horse. Where's Glendower?" added he, turning round.

"He was with Charles; but the hounds have turned from him all the way. Here he comes, and a pretty figure he looks."

"Hallo, Glen, what's the matter? You look as if you'd been down."

"So I have, and came up again. This brute never would face water."

"What sort of a bottom was it, then?" again asked his friend Georgy, in a sympathising tone of voice.

"Why, d—d wet, of course: what should it have been?" Lord Glendower did not mind falling, but he

hated chaff. Then came three or four more really good men, but who had been beat by the pace, and who had pumped their horses now in catching hounds to no purpose. They brought a rumour of a farmer with a dead four-year-old, and an officer with a collar-bone out. As Porter turned up all right at dinner, it wasn't he. Then Lord Rosendale heard a hallo on the hill to his left, and away he went to ascertain its correctness. The Master and Charles seconded his efforts by the only assistance that had been wanted for the hounds during the run ; and after another quarter of an hour, the last five minutes of which was a race, the fox was pulled down within a field of his point, the great woods at Rosendale.

When Jack Bulstrode came down to dinner he heard the run being discussed in all parts of the room by the men, and his own name honourably connected with it. Everybody was glad to see Jack Bulstrode, and Lord and Lady Rosendale gave him a hearty welcome.

"And what did you do afterwards?" said Jack to Sir George Sherringhame.

"Nothing at all. We waited for our second horses, which came up with the ruck in about a quarter of an hour, and never got out of Rosendale Wood ; we galloped our hearts out, and killed below the osier-bed. What became of you?"

"I had no second horse out ; so I came quietly home." Jack Bulstrode did not add that he had been playing billiards with Lady Evelyn, while they were galloping their hearts out in another direction.

In decent society, where precedence goes for something, of course the captain of cavalry went in to dinner

with the nobodies ; and as Lady Evelyn was not yet out, and only preparing for her presentation in the spring, by a sort of Christmas laxity of discipline she fell to the lot of Jack Bulstrode. I do not think this arrangement gave either of them any great concern.

There is a cat-like affection for locality in the human species. In consideration of which peculiarity Jack, I suppose, retained his seat at breakfast and dinner (unless accident assigned him occasionally a fat, country woman in a turban, or the scraggy daughter of some political adherent of the Rosendale party), which was always in the vicinity of his school-room favourite. It was a most cheerful gathering ; the Duchesse de la Porte St. Martin condescended to patronise Jack, and the duc made a point of following him as near as he could, until a bullfinch thicker than usual, or a more formidable "bit of water" sent him, as he expressed it, "round by de gate." There was plenty of music and dancing to get through the evenings, and Jack's talents as a whist-player were in constant requisition. As to Lady Evelyn's sketchbook, it contained a likeness of herself and her sister at Timberfield, the earl on his favourite horse Springgun, charging a post and rails, and a gentleman in attendance, not unlike Jack himself, with a few modestly obliterative scratches over the face, in close attendance.

Open weather within a fortnight of Christmas is exceptional, and at last certain prognostications of Admiral Fitzroy and one Moore began to be fulfilled. The air, as they returned after a rattling gallop in a scent breast-high, became crisp, and the mud in the roads was positively streaky ; and in a day or two, when Jack's servant

brought in his bath, he informed his master that Mr. Segundo wished to know whether he should send on his horse.

“Send on, of course he must ! Why not ?”

“Please, Sir, he says there won’t be no hunting until twelve or one o’clock, if there is then. It don’t seem to give at all.” So Jack Bulstrode took another turn in bed, and dressed himself an hour later in a full suit of Scotch Tweed.

And it did not give anything but intense dissatisfaction, either that day or the next, or for several days following. There was nothing to be done for it but indoor amusements, varied with the shooting of outlying covers for the gentlemen, and skating on the lake for both sexes. It was a hard time for Jack Bulstrode ; and like a prudent man, he tried to run away from the danger. But he could not be spared. My lady wanted him for tableaux on Christmas Eve, and my lord was particularly anxious that he should stay till the shooting of the big wood ; it was expected to be very good, and the gunning ample and excellent. So that running away was out of the question. He really had as much principle as most men of his class, and a certain latitude is given to lovers and warriors not accorded to other men. Why, again, had they put him into the West Gallery, where he almost invariably met Lady Evelyn coming down to breakfast, or going up to visit Miss Nettleship ? “Her dear Nettle !” as she called her ; out of which she certainly was not plucking the flower safety. Amongst other things her unbroken ladyship managed to tumble through the ice, and get very nearly drowned. Jack was there as usual,

and managed to save her ; he didn't say with how much difficulty. They neither of them said anything about it, though it was certainly known to our dear Nettle and her ladyship's maid. They were both afraid lest she should be forbidden the lake, excepting under a full escort, and Nettle dreaded a wiggling for her inattention. Terribly compromising all this to an earl's daughter, and a dangerous pastime to Jack Bulstrode—who was not given to falling in love, but did most things with singular earnestness when he set about them. Upon my word it is conduct which you might have expected from an agricultural parson's daughter and her Cousin Tom home from Trinity for his Christmas vacation. I fear the tableau was a clincher : for of all extraordinary things to insist upon, Lady Rosendale first of all enhanced Lady Evelyn's beauty by turning her into Mary, Queen of Scots, and then finished off any lingering resolution of Jack Bulstrode, by putting him at her feet as David Rizzio.

And they went to church together on Christmas-day. The sun was bright, and sparkled on the glittering icicles by the roadside—the trees, laden with their winter fruits, crackled as the snow-wreaths fell before its power. There was a sympathetic happiness in the very atmosphere ; and nature had clothed herself in the white robes of peace and good-will, to greet the most joyful, the most love-inspiring of our festivals. How glorious is the triumphant song of the cathedral choir, with the pealing notes of the sustaining organ on that morning, raising and cheering faltering humanity, and giving to religion its happiest and most genial form. All this, or something like it, Jack Bulstrode and Lady Evelyn Caradoc were compelled to go

through together, standing side by side with the rest of the church-goers from the earl's guests. There is a transcendant happiness in praying and in praising by the side of her you love, though it be in a square, well-carpeted little room, with a well-appointed fire-place, and secluded from vulgar gaze by scarlet curtains ; whether Jack Bulstrode felt it or not, or whether you yourself have done so, my patient reader, I know not ; if you have not, you have a foretaste of heaven to come, which is worth much gold and silver and precious stones, or, losing which, your life here seems to me to be one of but an imperfect shadow of good things to come.

But the frost would not go ; the tableaux, and the dancing, the good living, and good company kept them all warm at Rosendale Castle, but it did not thaw the ground, or bring out the hounds to draw the covers of the county. So when the covers had been shot, and the papers had abused the good old earl for having killed two thousand head of game in one week, on some of which the editors' wives and children, besides the tenants and friends of the estate, were fattening, the party began to break up in earnest. Among them Jack Bulstrode discovered another engagement. The last dinner was positively eaten, the last song was sung, the last rubber was played, and it was an undeniable fact that the earl's brougham would take Jack and his friend George Sheringham to the railway station in the morning, unless it rained cats and dogs in the night. How Jack swore at the frost in his sleep, and yet it seemed to him that he ought to go. "What's a poor devil with about a thousand a year in a cavalry regiment to do with such a girl as

Evelyn Caradoc?" Then he laughed aloud, savagely, as he flourished his razor, at the absurdity of the thing. "Ah! if a fellow had a chance now—a field-marshal's bâton! Such things have been done. India's the country. I'll exchange; hang this hunting and nonsense. Yes; and come back to find her married to some gambling young beggar like Georgy Sherringhame, who won't understand her, only because he's a baronet with twenty thousand a year." Thinking which he discarded all thought of India, and giving a kick to a half-packed port-manteau which stood in his way, proceeded to finish his toilette.

On the way down stairs, as he approached a landing-place, common to that wing of the house, and branching off into a double staircase, which led by two routes circuitously to the same place, Jack Bulstrode stopped a moment, and listened. Yes; true enough, there was the rustle of a silk dress coming along the passage, whose well-carpeted flooring gave no echo to the foot. In another moment Lady Evelyn stood before him. Poor Jack! many a man has stood before temptation for a long time, but it is the last straw which breaks the camel's back. This was his last straw.

"Lady Evelyn, I'm going. I am so glad to be able to say good-bye to you."

"Glad, Captain Bulstrode?" Lady Evelyn's smile was no more felicitous than his expression; and she did not look at him. The long almond eyes were cast down, and the long dark lashes swept her cheek, never full of colour, but now paler than usual. Jack looked, and thought he had never seen anything so lovely before,

Her small, well-shaped nose and long nostril, her short upper lip and rounded mouth and chin, and the budding dimples of childhood, which had not yet given way to the smoother charms of womanhood, broke down his strong resolve, and he stammered out, "Glad—glad? Oh, no! if you only knew how sorry I am—how I have struggled; but Evelyn," and, as he spoke, he took her passive hand in his, and looked into her face. The long soft eyes looked up; they were full of tears, and as he drew her nearer to him, and kissed her forehead, one, only one large drop descended and fell from her lashes to her cheek.

I suppose nobody can imagine what followed!

Jack Bulstrode went away, and made no sign; and the Lady Evelyn returned to her own place with Nettleship, till the spring; but they all agreed, the little French duc and his English duchesse, even Lady Margaret, who was as stupidly proper as everybody ought to be, that there never had been so happy a Christmas, notwithstanding the frost, at Rosendale before. The earl grew reconciled to it, and Lord Glendower abused nothing but the weather.

It was near the end of June. Lord Thistledowne lounged over the rails at one p.m. in Rotten Row. At that moment he was thinking whether he should offer himself and his estates to the new beauty of the season. Of acceptance he had not much doubt. Had he not a large rent-roll, unencumbered? was he not heir to a dukedom, and M.P. for —shire? and had he not met with the most flattering encouragement from Lady Rosendale and the earl? He was wondering whether it would be

necessary to refurnish the house in Belgravia, and whether he hadn't better wait one more winter ; Lady Evelyn was so very young !

The bearer of good news is proverbially welcome ; and Charlie Raikes, of the Foreign Office, a large contributor to the miscellaneous column of the *Hyde Park Bugbear*, was always "well posted" in the fashionable "on dits" of the day.

"Here's a go," said that young gentleman, full of the vulgarest animal spirits, and slapping Thistledowne on the back ; "here's a go. They say old Rosendale's doocedly cut up. Jack Bulstrode has run away with Lady Evelyn Caradoc." Lord Thistledowne became green with emotion. "They wanted to marry her to some infernal swell—some fellow like you, I should think—and she wouldn't have it, kicked over the traces, you know, and so forth ; and, by Jove they're off : ran away from Mrs. Mashtub's ball last night, and were married this morning ; penitential letter of course, and so forth. But there's a deuce of a shine, I can tell you. Glendower's furious."

"Jack Bulstrode ?" said Thistledowne, gloomily ; not quite able to realise the situation, but recovering himself by slow degrees.

"Yes ; Jack was there last Christmas. They say he wrote to the earl, but the earl wouldn't have it at any price ; of course he wouldn't. They thought it was all over ; but it wasn't."

"And what's to be done now ?" enquired the other, recovering his tone.

"Bleed old Rosendale, I should think—he's in a state

of collapse—and then provide for Jack with a good staff appointment : or make a swell of him somehow. That's what I should do, if I was the earl."

There's more sense in Charlie Raikes's last remark than might have been expected : however, they did neither.

They did not bleed Lord Rosendale, for he did not stand in need of it ; nor did they yet provide handsomely for Jack and his runaway beauty.

Lord Rosendale's characteristic was family pride. It was not enough that Jack Bulstrode was a gentleman ; he was a gentleman of no position, and could only detract from the family dignity. The blow was a very severe one to him. He was invisible for some days, and the family left town immediately. He had been applied to by Jack to be allowed to address his daughter : then had followed a letter as cold, as civil, as decisive, as the occasion required : and the affair had been dismissed as a nine days' wonder. As to Lady Evelyn's feelings, she was of Mrs. Malaprop's opinion. What had she to do with such unbecoming things as feelings ? She was to be reserved for a better fate. Then they came to town. Jack had become a loungeur at the opera, a stop-gap on the stairs and in the doors of great houses—constant at déjeûners, Chiswick fêtes, horticultural meetings, and the Row. It was thought desirable to end all question by the substitution of Lord Thistledowne. Lady Rosendale was not a cruel woman : both her other daughters had married for her, at least Lady Margaret was about to do so, and why should Evelyn be more particular ? Nettleship ought to look after the girl : but Nettleship's reign was over after

the first drawing-room. And now we have seen the end of it.

Everybody abused Jack, excepting his army friends, who thought it a noble precedent. It was wrong certainly, but Jack had lived in society where so little obloquy attach to stealing a neighbour's wife, that he did not think much of his neighbour's daughter. Besides, what could it signify? Lady Evelyn loved bread and cheese, and a pony phaeton of her own, and looking after the butcher's bills, and counting the things for the laundress; and above all, she dearly loved Jack himself, so what could it signify to anybody?

But there were moments when they felt that they had done wrong. Jack wished to see his wife in the society from which he had taken her, and surrounded by luxuries, as well as comforts. Lady Evelyn longed for a father's forgiveness and a mother's blessing; and although she took care never to let her husband see the effects of her regrets, she could not help mingling a tear sometimes with her caresses, which told him the truth. Every letter had been returned. Every attempt at reconciliation had been stamped out. They heard from friends (everybody has some friends) that their names were forbidden in the presence of the earl. "Mamma, dear, will forgive us some day, but I'm afraid of papa. I wonder whether Frank ever thinks about us in India?"

Frank did think about his favourite sister, and his beau ideal of a hero many a time, in the guard-room, or on outpost duty; and now that his leave had come was hurrying home to take a share in their proceedings.

So time went on. Jack Bulstrode and his wife lived

in a pretty cottage, which he had furnished extravagantly, and which he allowed to be deficient in no luxury whatever. He kept two or three horses, and a pony phaeton for Lady Evelyn; and he made her as happy as the day was long. They went out, and they received; but the luxuries of the respectable squirearchy and ecclesiastics, who formed their visiting circle, were not the elegancies of Rosendale Castle or the house of which they had the *entrée* before. Jack felt he was tabooed by all who would stand well with the Rosendales; and a married man with but a thousand a year must confine his visits at great houses within very moderate limits.

And now Christmas was coming again; as before, it was a bright cheerful-looking Christmas, and Jack's horses were once more eating their heads off, and it was a more serious business than before. Then, too, Christmas has, for the poor and needy of high society, a very black and dingy side. Those awful bills! He had never felt uncomfortable about them as a bachelor; and no sooner was he married than people positively expected to be paid. The more economical he pretended to be the more anxious were the people for their money. So he gave them some more orders, and that satisfied them.

But his wife—that was the trouble. As the anniversary of her great happiness came round, she began to look ill, and worn, if not unhappy. And she had another natural cause for anxiety, and so had he. “Jack dear, let us try once more. Write to mamma. She liked you, and she never was unkind. Don't let Christmas go over. I think even papa would scarcely like that. He always came to my room with a little present on Christmas-day. I

wonder who'll sleep in our rooms this time?" and then she began to cry. To comfort her he promised to try once more; so this time he wrote to my lady.

And then came an answer. It was kinder and more conciliatory. The earl was still implacable; but the duchesse was there, and Jack knew he had a friend at court. And then there came a box—a large box; it contained handsome presents for Evelyn—Christmas presents, and some curious little articles which no one at present in the cottage could well make use of. They might be useful in three or four months' time. And then there was a good-natured letter from the duchesse, and some kind messages from Lady Margaret. But it was silent about the earl, and Glendower was out of the question altogether.

But Christmas kept advancing, and they were no nearer the happy meeting than heretofore.

Jack and his wife were at luncheon about three days before the festival which ought to bring together all hearts, when a carriage from the railway drove up to the cottage, and a handsome young fellow stepped out and made his way through the garden. Frank Caradoc had returned, and having announced to his mother his resolution of going to see his sister, the feeble opposition which was offered to his wishes was easily broken down. He had mentioned their names before his father, and, for the first time, they had been listened to without an outbreak. So Frank Caradoc started on his mission, and one of the family had at last made his way to the forbidden home.

Years had passed since they had met. The boy had

become a tried and stalwart soldier. There was the same light heart, the same open hand; but they had been tempered by trial and checked by experience.

"Evelyn, you'll come with me?"

"And leave my husband? Never, Frank. His people shall be my people. We go together to Rosendale, or not at all."

"Then you will both come?"

"Have you come here, Frank," said Jack Bulstrode, "with an invitation from your father? I can be an unwelcome guest in no man's house."

"No, Jack, I know that well enough; but you must sacrifice something to an old man's pride."

"I have mine."

"Yes; but no man has trampled upon it, or you would be the first to resent it. Come, Jack, you owe my father something. Let the first Christmas I have passed among them for some years be a happy one. Don't let us have to say that we threw away a chance. Christmas comes but once a year."

Jack knew he had done wrong, and conscience makes cowards of us all. Then he looked at Lady Evelyn's face, and remembered the first tear he had seen upon it. It was not quite a year ago. They flowed now fast enough, and some bitterness was mixed with them, though she sat with her hand locked in his, as if nothing should part them.

"I'll return with you, Frank, and ask his pardon. I've done him a grievous wrong; for now I know the treasure I stole from him."

So they went on the morrow, and at nightfall they

reached the village in whose church they had prayed together ; and there they stopped.

Lady Rosendale was in her private room on Christmas Eve. She bore her sorrow nobly, and she had had something to bear, for countesses can feel, though the world does something to harden while it polishes them.

"Frank," said the lady ; and he stopped upon the threshold. "You have seen her ? Poor child, what would I give if she were here. If you had waited but one day your father would have written by you. He sent a letter last night. Can they get here by Christmas-day ? Surely they will lose no time !"

Frank walked into the stable-yard and ordered a brougham. "To the 'Glendower Arms,' quick." The bright sun was still shining on the snow-clad branches, as though it had never ceased to shine, and as they drove back through the crisp atmosphere, and watched the snow-wreaths once more falling before it, they knew that their hearts were light once more, like the sun, but that, like it, they had been clouded for a season.

Lord Rosendale was in his study when Frank arrived.

"My dear father, am I intruding ?"

"My boy, you never gave me a moment's unhappiness in your life ; ever welcome, Frank, ever welcome."

"Shall this be a happy Christmas ? Will you make it so to me ?"

Lord Rosendale looked at his son, and sighed a little heavily. "I have written, Frank." It had evidently been a trial to him, but the earl was a gentleman and a Christian.

"And have you forgiven them, Sir—really, truly ? Oh, how good !"

"As I hope to be forgiven."

The door had not been closed. At that moment a loud sob broke in upon the solemnity of the old man's speech; the door opened, and in another instant Lady Evelyn was in his arms. Earls are not given to the display of emotion, but as he clasped his daughter tighter and tighter, he still found a hand to hold out to Jack Bulstrode, as he said, "Go away now, my good fellow; go to my lady. It will be all peace and good will to-morrow; let it be so now and for evermore."





THE CHANCES OF A BATTUE.

THERE are thousands of reasons to induce a handsome widow and her still handsomer daughter — *matre pulchra filia pulchrior* — to visit Ems, Wiesbaden, Homburg, or Baden-Baden in the autumn of the year—health, wealth, vanity, *ennui*, the picturesque, tranquillity, or economy. We have been *désillusionné* on this last subject by the social brigands of the Continent; and if Scotland and England furnish formidable examples of a like indifference to expense, at all events we get what we want. Health? Mrs. Feversham and her daughter wanted no repairs, notwithstanding the demoralising effects of a somewhat heavy London season; and as to wealth, they had enough, and nothing to spare. Their vanity, if we admit that they had such a failing, had been gratified to its utmost; and as to *ennui*—it is the lot of humanity. The picturesque can be gratified in the British isles to any extent; and tranquillity is a question of mind and butcher's bills.

Mrs. Feversham was a widow; that seems to explain much. She was handsome, well-born, well-dressed, moderately well-off, and of that happy position in society

which enabled her to go anywhere, to say and do many things, and to keep her own counsel and her head well above water—at a moderate expense. Indeed, her great characteristic, and that which tended to her general success in life, was her “moderation.” Perhaps a more general favourite with mediæval beaux, or one more respected even by the ever-sceptical Young England, was not to be met with. Mary Feversham was an English girl—*not* of the period—sufficiently impulsive to create a *furor*, and sufficiently reserved to check it at its outburst. She was not remarkable for the size or colour of her chignon, or the Parisian simplicity of her short petticoats and *fichu*. She had brown hair, brown eyes, soft and long—one must have length somewhere—a small, well-formed nose, and a mouth and chin which seem to have hitherto fallen to the lot only of Apollo and Lord Byron. She might have been behind the fashion in dress but for the untiring energy of her maid. The combination of both kept her up to the mark. Of mental qualities we say nothing; let them develop themselves as the story progresses towards Christmas.

Mrs. Feversham, whose good qualities as we proceed may not be so apparent, deserves that she should be recorded as an excellent mother. Her disinterested attachment to Mary was the theme of universal praise; and, to judge by the epitaphs in the Kensall-Green Cemetery, affectionate parents must be at a premium. A vulgar widow as good-looking as Mrs. Feversham would have had at least one eye open to her own interests. But she was not a vulgar woman. She was above all such considerations; she enjoyed her independence and the

pension of a general-officer's widow, and was not disposed to risk the loss of either unless under circumstances of very peculiar temptation.

Having therefore nothing to do at the end of the London season, and Mary Feversham not having yet adopted those manly graces which would have qualified her for a moor in Scotland, the two ladies found themselves wandering about, encumbered with a courier and a maid, among the German spas. They met what they were pleased to call everybody—which meant certain old acquaintances affected with chronic gout or a plethora of gold pieces; and numberless foreigners of assured position, who pretended to drop their homage, and really dropped their money, in the *salons* of the grand-dukes and failing potentates, who are so much indebted to our love of speculation.

Among the young men who had made the acquaintance of these ladies at Homburg, Frank Pollington was one of the most distinguished. There was just a sufficient mystery hanging over his antecedents to make him a desirable acquaintance. It was clear enough, by the society in which he moved, that, whatever his infirmities, they were those of a gentleman; so, by sitting at the same table, and listening to the same music, and looking at the same moon, Frank Pollington and Mary Feversham soon became close allies. There was another table too at which he sat, which Mary knew nothing about.

When people are interested about the same objects, especially moons, they soon become interested in one another.

“Frank, what's the matter? You look as miserable

as a cow up a tree. Had a bad day?" enquired Spencer Rice of his friend.

"On the contrary. I believe I'm a thou. to the good; not before I wanted it."

"The deuce you are! Better than a Scotch moor, anyhow."

"Certainly, if you mean walking on a thing like the side of a house, with nothing to shoot at," rejoined Frank, with a happy illustration of the present season. "It's stupid enough, notwithstanding."

"Let's go to Baden, then."

"Hardly," said Frank; "they've been very good to me here. What's to be done there?"

"Oh, everybody's going. The Prince of Carlsbad, Catchmouski, Nockenheim, the duke, Lady Mary, Claribel, Lord Featherbed, the Fevershams——"

"How the devil do you know?" and Frank rather forgot himself on the sudden revelation of their intentions.

"I heard her say so to Cleaver—the old admiral, you know—not an hour ago. I think I shall go too. It's quite a pleasure to look at that girl; and as to the mother, she's positively charming. I could almost marry her myself."

Frank Pollington smiled at the notion, and wondered in his own mind what sort of a father-in-law his friend Spencer would make.

The movement troubled Frank, for he had never calculated on the possibility of such a separation, and now it struck him forcibly that it must come sooner or later. "Here we are in September, and by the end of

the month I may have to take leave of her for ever ; by Christmas, Heaven knows where I shall be ! ”

“ What a charming young man Mr. Pollington seems to be ! ” said Mrs. Feversham, as she sat outside of the Kursaal on the evening previous to our last conversation.

“ Charming. I remember him in the —th Hussars ! pity he sold out, for I fancy all the money’s gone, and he’ll have to be provided for in the colonies,” replied the admiral.

“ In the colonies ? ”

“ Yes ; he’s well connected distantly to three or four good people ; and that’s the sort of thing he must come to. I fancy he’s done pretty well here. You see a good deal of him, don’t ye ? He’s a capital fellow ; but—well ! *un peu mauvais sujet.* ”

“ This place gets dull after a time, admiral ; don’t you think so ? We think of trying Baden for a week or two ; and then we have some visits to pay in Nottinghamshire before we get to Brighton for the fall of the leaf.”

Mary’s eyes filled with tears ; whether at the fall of the leaf, or the new page in her life’s history that was presented to her so vividly, I don’t know. Mrs. Feversham was too good a mother not to take Mary gently to task ; but Mary was too good a lover to get much out of. She kept her own counsel, if she had any to keep ; for she opened her eyes widely when Frank was mentioned to her, and only said, “ Mamma, dear, you must be dreaming ; if Mr. Pollington has made a confidante of you, it’s more than he has done of me.” She said it coolly enough, but five minutes later she cried quietly and un-

affectedly in her own room ; and three days later they were in Baden-Baden.

They had been there two days, and Mary Feversham wondered when or whether she should see Mr. Pollington in London or Brighton. She had not mentioned their intended movement from Homburg, and those who analyse motives may perhaps fathom, in the girl's mind, the depth of this reticence. Spencer Rice felt no cause for such delicacy ; and as Germany belongs to no one in particular but the Prussians, Frank saw no reason why he should not once more look at the face that haunted him night and day. At any rate, he might take leave of it, if he could do nothing else. So he readily responded to his friend's invitation to go and have "a punt." So it happened on the third day after an all-sufficient dinner at the Russic, Mrs. Feversham and her daughter, duly protected by an English minister, a foreign duke, a banker from Frankfort, and three or four attachés from Vienna and St. Petersburg, all out on a holiday, entered the rooms of the Kursaal in great force. The party was distinguished enough to attract attention, and the elegance of Mary Feversham—handsomely dressed, and looking like an English lady—created a diversion in their favour, in the midst of meretricious ornaments and foreign beauty. They wandered slowly round the crowded tables, where the clink of gold and florins, and the silky softness of the thousand-franc notes, fail to shock the sense of decorum. They watched with eager interest for the haggard faces, trembling hands, passionate exclamations of unfortunate victims, or the triumphant gestures of the lucky players. They watched in vain. Here and there

were heavy speculators, Poles, Russians, Frenchmen, and a compatriot or two, of no high class. They were impassive, dull, absorbed; they saw a bright sparkling hand or arm push forward its rouleau with a laugh, and a gesture of disdain here and there; but change was imperceptible through the enamelled coat which clothed those haggard features with rejuvenescence. The hands, for the most part, that clutched the gold, were rude, hard, unwashen—the faces were common and vulgar, the women as a rule old, ill-dressed, and hideous. Only in the great saloon was the magnificence of jewelry, colour, material, and *abandon* assembled; and here Mrs. Feversham and Mary, with their friends, were about to conclude their satisfied curiosity. There was one more table to look at, and they advanced towards it. At that moment a hand such as they had long expected to see, fine, white, nervous, unringed, the hand of a man of high-breeding, was extended to place some notes on red. There was no mistake about the earnestness of the player, for the peculiar trembling of the hand was indicative of it. And then they saw the face—it was pale enough, and the interest in the stake shone out from the eyes like latent heat awaking. It was only for the moment that Mary and her mother saw Frank Pollington; in another the croupier cried, “*Noir gagne, et le couleur perd!*” and as he swept the money towards him, Frank collected the *débris* of his night’s work, and walked rapidly out of the room.

The stories that had been told of Frank Pollington were in the main true. He was a gambler, a man of pleasure, and had no money to justify his extravagant

habits. He was at the present time a loser of three thousand pounds by his last essay at the tables. His logic was of a curious kind—unconvincing, perhaps. It was after a fashion, however, which recommends itself to adoption comparatively. The argument is better than some. “What is the use of five thousand pounds to me? None at all. If I can make it ten, I’ll stop, and endeavour to do something with it. I’ve heard of the City, and I know fellows do go into business with ten thousand. I wonder whether Mary Feversham would have me, if I were to do something to get a living for myself. Featherbed must be a fool to play; so is that Frankfort banker. They roll in money—smell of it; what can they want with more? But if I could just double this, I’d stop—that is, I think I would if Mary would but have me.”

But the next day after his *mauvais coup* Mary was farther from him than ever; for if ever a mother had justice on her side it was Mrs. Feversham, and Mary knew it. A gambler! Could there be any hope, any prospect of happiness? A gambler and without money! This affectionate mother judged rightly; she did not say this, but she looked it; and Mary acquiesced, like a good girl as she was. Of course it was not necessary to fight shy of Featherbed, or the duke, Nockenheim, Catchmouski, or the Prince of Carlsbad; that was another matter. They could afford to play; besides, they were not in love with Mary, nor Mary with either of them.

But before they left Baden-Baden Frank Pollington found his tongue, and an opportunity for using it. Mr. Robertson says the Alter Schloss is a first-rate place for

a declaration : the fact is, you have quite enough to do to look after yourself there among the stones, rubbish, and roots of trees. It was not at the Alter Schloss, then, but at a picnic at Eberstein, that Frank Pollington tried to ascertain whether Mary would listen to him—not now, but when he should be in a fit position to make her his wife. He ascertained enough to urge him to exertion, if he once got what he called “a start in life;” but if the conviction made him any happier, it was scarcely fair upon Mary Feversham, who returned to England in September, in a condition which sportsmen are apt to represent as “hard hit.” What made it worse was, that Mrs. Feversham would hear nothing about it, know nothing about it, and declined all confidences upon the subject. It was not his poverty, nor his manners, nor his birth, though of course they couldn’t have lived upon Mary’s little fortune, nor on hers till her death—it was simply that he was “a gambler.” Right, Mrs. Feversham ; stick to your text ; rich or poor, gentle or simple, it’s the terrible propensity, my dear : Frank Pollington is a gambler.

No lady of assured position has been known to pass through life, and few to come into it, without the assistance of Dr. Bland. He has translated Moore’s melodies into Latin elegiacs, is of no politics, and is strongly suspected by the outsiders of wearing ruffles. These are his main qualifications. He would have delighted Gil Blas, for he never dabbles in medicine unless driven into a corner, and then lets nature take her course. This medical diplomatist was called in to see Mary Feversham in the course of the winter.

By what I have said, the reader will understand the

case just as well as Dr. Bland. Mary had not followed her mother's advice without considerable pain. She was a girl of good sense, with a fair share of self-esteem, and she knew the advice to be sound, and that the world would have indorsed it. But she was also blessed with a certain virtue known in some circles as constancy ; and therefore she had to suffer, as one always has to do, for virtue's sake. It was a strong trial, and it shook her ; but she righted again, and was once more under weigh.

"And is that your idea of constancy?" Indeed it is ; far more than if she had moped and sighed and shut herself up. It was a constancy that everybody does not understand, and that but few practice. It commands no sympathy, and therefore has few followers. There is a flattering self-sacrifice in giving way which recommends itself to weak minds, and an amount of self-respect in silent abnegation which only stronger ones appreciate. Mary Feversham did not forget nor regret, but she bore her silent sorrow without allowing it to speak to herself or others.

Sir George Compton is Mrs. Feversham's first cousin, and has always paid her the compliment of a yearly invitation to Compton Bassett.

"My dear, we must shoot the covers soon. We'll do so the week before Christmas."

"Certainly, Sir George. Why not?"

"And you'll ask your usual party, and the Fevershams can spend the Christmas week here, if they have no engagement."

"I should like it of all things. Mary was not looking

well when I last saw her ;” and that’s all Mary’s friend knew about the state of her health.

“ I must ask Lord Ockham : he has only been home a month since he came to the title, and has hardly been out yet. As he scarcely knew his cousins, their death can have given him very little distress, and thirty thousand a year is a wonderful consolation under more painful circumstances.”

And Sir George Compton did as he said ; he collected a cheerful party to shoot his covers the week before Christmas, of which Lord Ockham and the Fevershams were a not unimportant part as regards our story.

Lord Ockham ! One thing was clear,—even in a great house like Compton Bassett he was a court card, not to be played on every occasion. There was something not exactly mysterious, but exceptional, in Lord Ockham’s case which you were expected to know, and of which, notwithstanding, some of the people were ignorant. Sir George and Lady Compton talked of Lord Ockham as they would have talked of Smith, Brown, or Jones ; but everybody was made to feel that Lord Ockham was the lion of the guests. He would not only have the precedence which his title gave him, unless a more lordly lion stopped the way, but it was felt that he would have the warmest corner in the covers, and that the best day would be made to depend upon Lord Ockham’s convenience ; and no one had said, “ Who is Ockham ? ” Those who knew didn’t require the information ; those who did not felt half ashamed that it was so.

“ I think you know Lord Ockham, Mrs. Feversham ? ” said the host.

"No, I never saw him. I knew the late lord ; but at his death the title went into a distant branch."

"Yes ; a second cousin. It was a melancholy business. That fever carried off the father and both sons, fine lads as ever you saw, in little more than a fortnight. However, the present man is a very gentlemanly, agreeable person. You'll see him here to-morrow at dinner ; and we begin shooting the covers on Tuesday."

"And what aged man is he ?"

"Quite young—seven-and-twenty, perhaps ; but he's been abroad lately a good deal ; for, between ourselves, he got through a great deal of money, considering he had little or nothing beyond his commission." And here, Sir George gave his elbow a flourish, which implied a taste for hazard—a sign perfectly comprehensible to well-bred ladies of a certain age, though Mary Feversham remained in ignorance of the young lord's previous tastes.

"A telegram—just arrived, Sir," said the footman presenting it.

"Nothing happened to Lord Ockham, I hope ?" said Sir Gilbert Golightly ; baronets always hang together.

"Nothing material," said Sir George, whose colour had for a moment deserted his cheek—"detained by business for an hour or two—come later in the evening—Lord Featherbed" (he was only a viscount), "will you take Lady Compton ?" and Sir George went out more at ease, and a place was left for Lord Ockham at Lady Compton's right-hand.

Mary Feversham was just about finishing whatever ladies consider necessary to a night's repose—the last

chapter of a novel, or their back hair—when her mother put her head into the room.

“Lord Ockham’s arrived, my dear.”

“Has he? I am glad of it. What’s he like, mamma?”

“I haven’t the least idea—we haven’t seen him; but—” (and here Mrs. Feversham approached her daughter, and gave her a most maternal but supererogatory salute) “good-night, darling, and don’t forget that Lord Ockham is a very different person from poor Frank Pollington.”

That was a very impolitic shot, Mrs. Feversham; for Mary went to bed, and thought that most likely he was very different indeed; and, as far as she was concerned, the difference lay the wrong way. So she cried herself to sleep quietly, and did not look her best in the morning. But it did not signify, for when she came down to breakfast Lord Ockham had just killed his first rocketeer in the home plantation.

When dinner was announced the room was very full, and Mary Feversham had forgotten to think of Lord Ockham or her mother. Absorbed at the moment in the platitudes of Lord Featherbed’s brother, Mr. Downybird, who was describing his immense success with a right-and-left at a brace of driven partridges, she took her seat at the end of the table on the same side as the stranger, and without paying any attention to her mother’s suggestions. The soup had gone the round of Sir George’s guests, when Lord Featherbed, across the table, said,

“When did you come from the continent, Ockham?”

“I came from Baden-Baden on my cousins’—” replied Ockham; and before he could complete the sentence Mary Feversham’s spoonful of *potage à la bisque* fell

plump into her lap, to the detriment of her dress and the distress of her maid, who would hear of nothing less than a new breadth. Yes, that was the voice ; the voice, certainly, that she had longed to hear again, and almost despaired of hearing. Then she took a furtive glance up her own side of the table, and there on the right-hand side of Lady Compton, sat Frank Pollington, ex-captain of the —th Hussars, and late *mauvais sujet* and detrimental.

When Lord Ockham declined to shoot the next day until after luncheon, on the plea of unexpected letters to write, he made the identity of the one with the other sufficiently apparent to the lady concerned in a manner that the reader can learn to appreciate only by experience.

There's a place called a smoking-room in every man's house, into which most men find an excuse for finding their way. Charlie Sansterre suggests one more of Compton's "patagas" to Jack Bishop and another subaltern or two, who had come down from St. James's to kill or be killed, as the case might be. It was a good time to satisfy curiosity, as the discourse was unlimited in matter, and unrestrained in manner. The flow of soul was conspicuous by the absence of wit or grammar.

"I say, Jack, do you know what Compton's head-keeper calls you ?" enquired Charlie of his friend.

"Not I," replied Lieutenant and Captain Bishop, of the Guards.

"He calls you 'his 'oliness.' It seems that he heard your name and mistook it for your title ; and having had

dukes, earls, barons, and barrenknights, as he calls them, here, but no clerical gent of so high a figure, he's given you precedence of us all. That accounts for your having had the best places through the week."

"Ockham shoots well, doesn't he?" enquired the lieutenant and captain.

"You'd better ask the Prussian he shot in the shoulder. The authorities at Brucksal seem to think he shot too well."

"Tell us about Ockham, Charlie, that's a good fellow." And Charlie Sansterre, who rather prided himself on his powers as a *raconteur*, shall supply our deficiencies for the reader, while the *roués* of the party drew round the fire and replenished their tumblers, one week before Christmas. The language is figurative, but sufficiently explanatory. So he began :

"When Frank Pollington sold out he went abroad—Spa, and all that sort of thing, you know. Well, he lived pretty well, you see, and just amused himself at the tables—all on the square, of course. But last year he got awfully wild. Some woman he fell in love with wouldn't have him—deuced odd, wasn't it? and doesn't it make a fellow wild, too, that's all! Then he had a row with a Prussian officer—just then they were full of fight, you know—been at some place—Königs-something—knocking over the Austrians, you know; and he shot the Prussian for calling some English lady something or other she only looked like—rather fast, you see. So they locked him up in Brucksal, or some such place—a fortress, you know; and then his cousin and both his sons died of fever suddenly at some English place on the sea-side—

went there for change of air, you know—wasn't it odd ? And so—so he came into the title. They let him out of the fortress, you know, when the government applied ; when a fellow's a swell it's so different. He'd only got one blessed 'thou.' left, and now he's got thirty thousand a year. I say, isn't Mary Feversham handsome ?”

“Regular stunner !” replies Mr. Bishop.

And that's the story. Do you know, reader, that Christmas turned, for two people, into a wonderfully happy new year ?





THE "LOVE-CHASE."

EVERY man has his own particular notions about Christmas, its peculiarities and privileges ; and he has a right to enjoy them unmolested. I know the true poetical sentiment in which the great majority indulges ; the scarlet berry, the miniature spires of diamond hue, the glittering Gothic which every spray is expected to exhibit, and the jocund and merry laugh, the usual beef and pudding, the padding of this winter festival. To see the bracing, vigorous exertions of these time-servers, for they are nowhere in the summer sunlight, you would suspect them all of having stolen their impressions of the time from Sir Frank Grant's picture of Mrs. Markham. They carry clean, crisp snow, bright atmosphere, tiny boots, and scarlet petticoats in their very faces ; and feel almost insulted if you are pleased to hint a difference of opinion. But I have my own notions of pleasure ; and though the pastimes and merriment of this side of the year have a glacial tendency, I shall say a word here for a sport which is an enemy to frost, and begs a genial atmosphere for its enjoyment.

There is nothing so uncomfortable after all as to be

always fighting with the atmosphere: and putting on extra clothing is in some sense attacking that fashionable institution, Christmas weather. There is a pretence after all in that conventional "splendid day!" when it is accompanied by blue cheeks, and a red nose, tears everywhere, a general inclination to shiver, and hands thrust fathom deep into your own pockets, instead of your neighbours', as has been the fashion lately. I love warmth, softness, geniality. I like ices with the chill off, and December with a touch of April in it. I like to skate when it is absolutely necessary; but, like a popular duke, a lover of the turf, I hunt whenever I can.

Well! Christmas happens to be a time of year when you may indulge your predilection, if the weather be as open as the question; and although the prejudice is in favour of snow, and the warmth of the affections forms a noble contrast to the severity of Siberia, fewer tears would not be dried, and fewer weary hearts would not be made light because the north easter was supplanted by the balmy zephyr. Clods must be broken, perforated by Nature's plough; but old women put in a claim to be kept alive, if consistent with the happiness of the young.

The Welters of Gorsebury were an old family, I mean genealogically. As to their longevity, it would have been easier to speak, if more of them had died in their beds. There would have been family portraits in mail armour of the time of Richard I. had there been but family portrait painters. The present representative, Sir Hugo, looks quite capable of cutting a thousand Pagan throats for the sake of the Church; or might have knocked on the head any number of Presbyterians, or hanged outside of the

moat some scores of Roundheads, had he only lived in the days to do it. There can be no doubt that three or four scions of the younger branches survived the Wars of the Roses to perpetuate the name; and that with the name something of the character had descended. The elder branches had died in harness under the banners of the Yorkists, true legitimists. Sir Hugo was a baronet, and nothing more; and, of course, could not well date further back than 1611; but before that time the Welters had been greater far than since. They had been warriors and statesmen with Henry III. and the Edwards, viceroys with Elizabeth, courtiers with Charles II., and scholars with Anne. The present baronet had been an M.P., and had refused a peerage; what was more, he was an M.F.H., and made great use of his privileges. It was a marvel to see him ride to hounds, and to hear him swear, but pleasanter not to be the object of his imprecations.

But Sir Hugo Welters, in spite of some weaknesses (we say *weaknesses* at Christmas), was a good fellow in the main. If he had a proud heart it was a large one. No one suffered much injustice at his hands, if he could but patiently endure for a time. The folks at Gorsebury trembled in their shoes if they had done wrong, but when village peccadilloes were kept within bounds, and the foxes were all right, he gave away like a prince, he was the most generous of landlords, and the most kindly hearted of patrons. It was a pleasure to want anything if Sir Hugo was well pleased. Indeed, under such circumstances he was usually good-tempered as well as large-hearted. But he had a great idea of the importance of the Welters of Gorsebury, and of Sir Hugo and his eldest daughter

Lucy, in particular. As Christmas was approaching the doings of the Hall were to be great, as became a great man. The lads and lasses were to get up their best steps for the servants' hall; oxen were to be roasted whole; a magnificent dole was to be apportioned to the old and needy; the tenants were to be dined and danced, and everybody in the parish was to be made light of heart, except—Sir Hugo's favourite daughter, Lucy.

Two bachelors sat in a very comfortable room in St. James's Street; and, *horresco referens*, they were smoking. I know that I have hurt the feelings of the critics by the introduction of cigars and horseflesh upon some occasions; but truth is stronger than even my respect for the critics' prejudices; and men will smoke. They were smoking and talking too.

"Do you know the county of Dwnybird?" said Dick Loseley, a long legged light dragoon, as he spread out those appendages on his friend's hearth.

"Rather," replied Tom Cavendish of the Household Brigade, "seeing I was born in it, and the governor lives there."

"Then you can tell me all about the hounds—good country, isn't it—lots of grass?" and Dick raised himself, and almost sat upright at the hope of hearing his anticipations confirmed.

"As good as the Harborough country, and the biggest ditches you ever saw in your life."

"That's capital,—wants a workman then?"

"And a real hunter; pace and talent to get through it and over it. There are three good packs—Spoonbill's, the duke's, and the Gorsebury."

"Gorsebury! what, is that in Downybird?"

"Of course it is—Hugo Welters is the master."

Here for some reason or other Dick Loseley's usually placid features underwent as much change as a light dragoon's are warranted to undergo—that is to say, he *blushed*, stroked his moustache, and repeated the name of "Welters" in a meditative sort of way two or three times.

"Yes! Welters! Sir Hugo Welters, of Gorsebury. Do you know him?"

"Well, not exactly; do you?" and here Dick found his cigar a very valuable aid to conceal some sort of confusion.

"Know him," said the other, with a cheerful, almost boisterous laugh, "I should think I do. Everybody knows Welters. He's the most extraordinary fellow that ever lived. You remember little Meekins of 'ours.' He went to hunt at Gorsebury, and fell in love with Sir Hugo's daughter, Lucy Welters. Rather good of Meekins, wasn't it? hasn't a shilling besides his pay, and he's only five feet five in his boots, two inches shorter than the girl herself."

"Devilish impudent," said Dick, with a reaccession of colour, being himself only a soldier of Fortune, which means a soldier without any fortune at all.

"The girl didn't care about him, I suppose?"

"Well! I don't think the baronet gave him a chance to find out, for he set Lucy to ride at him, and the third fence she gave him such a fall that he was taken up insensible, and for weeks he wasn't expected to live."

"What a pleasant person!"

"The other day some fellow met his daughter with the

Dalrymples at Lucerne ; he heard something about it, and sent off for her at once. You recollect the Dalrymples, you used to be very thick there." Dick Loseley had not yet recovered his natural complexion.

"I suppose one can live in the same county, if not in the same parish, Tom, with your friend?"

"Oh ! he's not a bad fellow, only he means this girl for Lord Chester, the duke's eldest son. They're tremendous swells are the Welters, you know, awfully rich, and all that ; and it was a cool thing of Meekins, who's about as much chance of coming to the title or of marrying such a catch, as you or I have. I should like to know who the fellow at Lucerne was ; for they do say that the girl liked him, and that the governor has half quarrelled with the Dalrymples about it."

"I dare say there's no truth in it," rejoined Dick, stretching his long legs still further, and rising to go ; "fellows do tell such lies."

There might be nothing in it, but the coincidence was strange that no sooner was Dick Loseley clear of his friend's threshold, than he began to compare himself with Meekins. The length of his legs bore the scrutiny well. It would have been a very long Lucy that would have out-topped the captain. There was not much to choose between them in the way of rent roll, and they were both gentlemen ; but Dick, without vanity, could not help thinking that women had some taste and discrimination. Besides, this Dick Loseley had been that autumn to Lucerne.

The doings of the great house always transpire in the village. There never was a little love-making, or a

domestic scene of any kind, an angry father, a recalcitrant daughter, a prodigal son, or a family difficulty, that did not find its way, within four-and-twenty hours, into the parish public. And so it was with Sir Hugo Welters. Lucy Welters had scarcely returned from Switzerland ere the servants slunk abashed before the boots of her father as they came clanking down stairs, spurs and all, of a morning. It was, indeed, a comfort to reflect that the hunting season had begun, and that Sir Hugo was falling foul of his field or his foxes at least five days out of the seven. A hard time of it for a fortnight had Sir Hugo's own man. Not a pair of breeches buttoned to his mind, not a bridle or saddle was on the right horse; those had martingales on that did not want them, and yawning brutes, with light necks, that carried their heads anywhere, were sent out in snaffle-bridles. Snaffle-bridles forsooth! did any man that crossed a country like Sir Hugo ever ride a horse in a snaffle-bridle? The soup was wretched, the fish over-boiled, and there was not an entrée fit to be eaten for three weeks. And all that time poor Lucy's eyes were heavy, and her cheeks were pale; at least they said so at the village forge, and in the home farm; and then they told the story of their mistress's first love.

But after a time things got a little better. The baronet grumbled only at intervals. His valet got some sleep, and the dinner was eaten with fewer curses. Christmas was coming, and a good day's sport did wonders. It was clear that everybody was going to be happy once more, excepting Sir Hugo's daughter Lucy.

In the meantime Dick Loseley laid his plans for a winter's campaign. He was sure the baronet would not horse-

whip him, nor call him out, and he desired nothing so ardently as to be sent on a cruise over those awful fences, which had nearly done for little Meekins of "ours," nursed like a rival omnibus by the baronet and his daughter. So he got together his stud—one or two very good performers among them—and came down to spend his leave with a friend in the county of Downybird.

A little love-making goes a great way in some places. Anthony Trollope thinks the balcony at Basle not bad ; I prefer Lucerne, Como, Baveno, or even further south. A good deal of mischief had been done by the gallant captain and Lucy Welters in a short time, and Mrs. Dalrymple was undoubtedly to blame for it. Lucy went home to her father quite impressed with the conviction that there was but one human being whom she could ever think of marrying, and Dick Loseley had conceived and almost expressed, a good, honest affection for Lucy Welters, apart from those worldly considerations which do influence some men in their selection of wives. It was all Mrs. Dalrymple's fault. Like many other women she was an inborn match-maker. Whether it is from a natural tenderness of heart, a desire to see others happy, or that universal vanity of power to bring about good, to protect the weak, to impart one's own sensations of happiness, I cannot say ; but there are women who can no more live without watching over the sensible interests of their friends, male or female, than I can live without beef and mutton. But Mrs. Dalrymple ought to have known better. She had nothing to do with sentiment. Her own was a marriage of convenience. Mr. Dalrymple would be an earl at his uncle's death, and she had a diamond necklace

and a house in Belgrave Square. What could she have to do with knocking up a {love-match? Sir Hugo was right when he sent for his daughter in a towering passion, and filled two sides of a sheet of Bath-post with reflections on his sister's imprudence, and tall talk of his daughter's expectations. When her aunt Lucy Dalrymple was Lucy Welters it was not so they had dealt by her.

So far matters had gone ; and Lucy was once more restored to equanimity and the head of her father's household. The latter she had morally resigned for a week or two, as the old savage was not in a humour to speak to her for that time ; or to issue any orders save through the housekeeper. His coldness, however, had not affected the weather, and luckily for Dick Loseley, and all who prefer breaking their necks over gates to tumbling through the ice, it remained as genial and open as old Jorrocks himself could have desired.

During the first week or two of Dick's visit the meets had been on the other side of the country ; and he had been fain to content himself with some preliminary gallops with Mr. Spoonbill and the duke, who were handier than Sir Hugo for his friends. Dick had just declared his intention of sending his horses on over night to hunt with the Gorsebury on Friday next, when the Downybird Chronicle announced a meet only twelve miles off, which saved him that inconvenience. "The Gorsebury hounds will meet at Lord Lanedown's on Friday next at 10.30," read Dick's host after dinner.

"Then we'll go, Dick. It's a splendid country, and there's a fox there that has twice beat them, after such a forty minutes as you don't see every day."

"A real good country, is it?"

"As good as Leicestershire." Upon which Dick Loseley rang the bell and ordered his groom to come to him. "I'll ride Musician to-morrow, and keep Timmeroo and the Rattler for Friday at Lanedown. Have the Rattler's shoes looked to. How's the glass?"

"Very steady, Sir; there's a beautiful soft rain coming down to-night, Sir." Saying which, Mr. Flight ran his coat-sleeve once round his hat, touched his forehead, and departed.

Dick Loseley was a scientific dawdie; he had reduced that agreeable method of dressing for the hunting-field before a dressing-room fire to an absolute science. An hour and a half was the least time he allowed himself, and then he generally managed to come galloping up to the meet, just as the hounds were moving off from the village, or just as they had reached the coverside. On the present occasion he was as punctual as it was in his nature to be; and considering the delicate struggle with which he finished his leathers below the knee, and the gentle pressure which that mysterious bow requires, to keep it just in place above boot, a quarter of an hour was less law than might have been expected to be given. By a well sustained gallop when the road admitted of it without much derangement of the toilette, and some short cuts over gaps and light fences, Dick arrived in time at the meet to cast his critical eye over one of the most inspiring delights of even a Christmas holiday.

Lanedown pastures was a fine open grass country, park-like in its features, interspersed with small covers, rather ornamental plantations, capable of holding a fox, but not

of permitting him to dwell when his business was to go. The country in the distance was greatly undulating, with plenty of galloping ground, and most uncompromising fences. There was not a cover within miles that could be called a wood by the greatest stretch of courtesy ; and there was a fox at the pastures which had twice run clean away from the hounds, and saved himself in what was called the Chase, after crossing the best of the Gorsebury country. When Dick Loseley reached the scene of action the hounds were preparing to move as usual ; and as the morning's draw would be for the "old customer," he gave his hack to his groom, and mounted the Rattler, a thoroughbred chestnut with white legs, which had done some good things with the Blazers, and other regimental celebrities. His critical eye took in the whole scene in a moment—it was provincial, eminently provincial, but of the highest class of practical sportsmanship.

The hounds strong, useful, and fit : the servants well turned out, without foppery, and mounted on sound and valuable horses ; not of the Mr. Brag school. Of the field he made a somewhat closer inspection ; and as the morning was fine, and (as they remarked who knew nothing about it) too clear for sport, and the time was only the Friday before Christmas-day in the following week, there was plenty to look at. There was a great holiday show ; everybody was at home ; the county member and Lord Lanedown with a few friends, unmistakable sportsmen, would have done credit to Melton by the neatness of their get-up, and the symmetry of their tails. The sporting linendraper of the county

town was at the head of a miscellaneous band of corduroy breeches and brown tops, with low crowned felt hats, on every description of animal that credit or money could procure : a few rosy-gilled farmers of the right sort to show the way over their own wheat or their neighbours'; and the irrepressible schoolboy on his shaggy pony, who is always "right in front" until he is what my friend Whyte Melville calls "left behind." Jovial faces all of them, bright, Christmas-loving, even without the hoar frost, careless of coming bills, which are only like the crusts of the walnut, providentially sent to prevent a repletion of happiness.

But none of these, not even the schoolboys and their ponies, were quite so attractive to Dick Loseley as they should have been ; for just as he began to feel a little indifferent to the preliminary proceedings, in turning the corner of the cover he came upon what he had been looking for, for sometime past. Just in front of him sat a young lady on a swish-tailed bay mare. She was talking to a dismounted horseman with considerable animation. It wanted no second glance to tell him that Lucy Welters was about to perform over the country before him. The closely-fitting short-skirted habit, the thin, well-fitting dogskin gloves, and the light, but strong hunting-whip which she carried, were salient changes from the well-manèged hack and elaborate toilette in which he had once before seen her in the Row. It was not a judicious moment for renewing his intercourse with her, and, with a beating heart, he pulled back the Rattler to a respectful distance. Close by, within ten yards of the lady, sat a gentleman, whose appearance, if not that of

the most refined class of modern habitué of the Quorn or Pytchley, was at least that of a most finished sportsman in a somewhat rougher sense of the word. He was "business" all over. The firm, close, but easy seat, and strongwell-made leathers and tops; the pink broad-skirted, double-seamed, and marked with honourable scars; the workmanlike but little fashionable cap; above all, the long, low, powerful, short-legged hunter, with the lean head, and light patrician-looking neck, set well into the muscular shoulders, proclaimed most unmistakably one of those determined customers that it is no disgrace to see in front of oneself. His whole attention seemed to be directed at this moment to the young gentleman who was presuming to talk to Miss Lucy Welters; and the expression of his face was not such as to encourage the notion that he felt much gratified. He looked, beard and all, as savage as a bear.

Dick had scarcely time to remark upon the unpleasant severity of his once possible father-in-law's general appearance and frown in particular, when Sir Hugo Welters (for it was he), seeing the hounds approach, with a wave of the hand ordered Dustham to "get forrard," while with a "Now then, Sir, by your leave," to one, and a "Where the devil are you coming to with that camel?" to another, he took his place at the head of the cavalcade.

Sir Hugo's field was singularly obedient. Those who knew him, from experience; those who didn't, from anticipation.

"Who's the man you spoke to on the white-legged horse, Lanedown?"

"Dick Loseley," says Lord Lanedown, "of the ——th

Hussars. Good fellow, and a good goer." Upon which Sir Hugo frowned horribly again, having heard that name before as he thought, somehow in connection with Lucerne.

"A garrison steeplechaser! we'll give him a taste of the Waterperry brook, if he's game to come after Lucy.

The hounds were not in cover five minutes before they found, and in another five they were away. "Is it the short-brushed one, Jem?"

"Yes, Sir Hugo."

"Then we're in for a stinger: bring 'em on as quick as you can;" and leaving the field to take care of themselves and the rest of the hounds to beguile the field, away went Sir Hugo, followed by his daughter, and about five-and-twenty more who knew the fox and the master too well to stop behind, and listen to the plaintive sounds of "Pray, gentlemen, hold hard," for the sake of three or four couple of young hounds, with a fox who was gone straight for the chase as fast as his legs would carry him.

Among the foremost of these was Dick Loseley. The exigences of the chase had called off the attention of Sir Hugo, and Dick had found an opportunity of renewing that dangerous intercourse which seemed to be as impolitic as it was sweet. A bright smile shone in the girl's eyes at the first moment of recognition, and a lovely blush "roseâ cervice refulsit," revealing to her lover that he had not been forgotten; but it gave way to a trembling tear which she dashed aside by a caracole of the swish-tailed mare, and a momentary pallor which was repulsed by the necessity of following Sir Hugo down the main ride of a small cover, and emerging over a hog-backed style at the bottom.

From that moment Dick Loseley did not lose sight of his chase. He stuck valiantly to her skirts, like a protecting deity, while for a quarter of an hour the hounds raced over the grass, and the despotic baronet on the short-legged hunter led the way over every sort of obstacle, which a grazing country usually affords to the lovers of sport. Few and far between were his followers : and those whom the pace had not yet shaken off, were fain to take to the gates and a serviceable green lane already. The white-legged chestnut was in close attendance on the swish-tailed mare, both holding their own within twenty yards of each other ; while the latter was so closely followed by some ardent sportsman, that Dick took upon himself to rebuke the gentleman as though the property he was jeopardising was already his own. "Keep your own line, Sir," roared he ; "you'll be on the top of the lady in a minute," for it was impossible to deny the possibility of a mistake over such a country and at such a pace. A minute's check at the end of a quarter of an hour over a cold plough, which just allowed the skilters to catch sight of the tail-hounds ; then an undeniable double post and rail which was safely negotiated by Dick Loseley alone, while the baronet and his daughter passed through a hand-gate to the right, and the hounds began to run again as hounds have never run before. That Sir Hugo was admiring Dick's performance in his heart there can be no doubt, though with his lips he was far from according him the meed of praise. "We shall never get rid of that fellow, till we get to the brook," said he, as Dick alighted two lengths ahead of anyone in a large grass field. "Confound him, how he rides." In ten

minutes more Sir Hugo was almost alone with his hounds ; quite alone as he thought, when casting his eye a little way round, he saw Lucy and the stranger still going side by side, but not within hailing distance. "She's not disposed of him yet, he's a different sort from Meekins ; but, thank goodness, here comes the water."

Now a man must be a really good plucked one to thank goodness for fifteen feet of very deep and rapidly flowing water, between two rotten banks, in the week before Christmas-day. Yet so it was. Sir Hugo knew himself and his daughter, and he knew his horse, and the swish-tailed mare, that had never made a mistake. He knew, too, that it was just twenty to one against a stranger seeing either of them again except on the road home ; and he did not think Dick was likely to wait for that after the ducking that was in reserve for him. With these characteristically Christian-like thoughts he sailed on to the line of willows.

Knowing the country, as Sir Hugo did, there was no necessity for hesitation. He therefore increased his stride as he neared the water, and with hounds here and there dragging their sterns after them up the bank, he continued his course as if he had jumped a gutter. He was a very queer temper, was Sir Hugo ; but, far too good a gentleman to look back, though he had done a good thing. Dick Loseley was not able to ride quite in the same way ; he knew nothing of the size of the brook, nor of the banks, nor of the nature of the ground. He saw there was a brook, by the hounds ; and that it was negotiable, by the baronet ; so with one eye on Lucy to the left, and the other to his own line, he went at it. The white-legged

chestnut landed safely and was on his legs in a moment ; but as his rider looked round for his companion, the bank broke under the swish-tailed mare, and she fell back into the water, on the top of her rider. As the waters closed over them, the white-legged chestnut with an empty saddle galloped past Sir Hugo. " Ah ! I thought we should do him at last ; if Jem and my second horseman are in the road we shall kill this gentleman before he gets to Knockbury Chase ;" thinking which he disappeared over a thick bullfinch and was seen no more.

While he was soliloquising, his daughter was drowning ; and as the poor girl was whirled past, her habit encumbering her and dragging her every moment down, she caught sight of her lover. Poor Dick ! she was free from the horse, which was something ; but the rains had swollen the brook, so as to render it doubly deep and doubly rapid. More quickly than we can write, he had thrown his whip round one of the willows, and swinging himself into the stream caught her habit as she floated by. He had succeeded in stopping her, but he looked in vain for assistance, and the weight of her clothing and the nature of the banks made it a difficult matter even now to lift her from the water.

At that moment he caught sight of a man fortunately on the right side of the water, who had gone round to a ford, and was now in pursuit of his master. If Dick Loseley was becoming exhausted he was still able to halloo, and in a minute or two the man was alongside with a pair of stirrup-leathers and other appliances, by which the poor girl was landed. For a minute or two her consciousness did not return ; and when after certain

restoratives she opened her large gray eyes, which looked all the larger for her pale face and dripping brown hair, and saw her lover standing over her and knew all that had happened, she smiled faintly but cheerily, as if hope pointed to fruition in the distance. There could be but one end to such an adventure ; the swish-tailed mare was caught and brought back, and the chestnut had been grazing quietly in the field for some time past, and as the groom observed that the lady had better keep in exercise till she could reach a farm-house, where they were known, she was mounted once more, and set off with Dick Loseley, and the second horseman, at a round trot. It was a happy half-hour for them both ; and they talked confidently of a meet at Clevedon next week, when Lucy was sure her father would “ thank Captain Loseley for——” and her voice became inaudible either because she put her handkerchief before her face, or because she had nothing more to say. The baronet was during this half-hour next of kin to a raving lunatic. He had lost his daughter, his second horse, and consequently his fox, when nearly dead-beat, and his temper followed.

It's a very odd thing, but that very night there was a hard frost ; the thermometer considerably below nothing ; which may account for the burning scent, but for nothing else. This dry weather was a damper to the lovers. “ No more hunting, no more meets,” said Dick : and then he went out, and dug the heel of his boot into his friend's lawn, that is, he would have done so, but it wouldn't go. This state of things he bore for four or five days, smoking and kicking, without changing the atmosphere : and as Christmas-day was coming he

vowed he must go back. "He would return when the frost was gone ; but he must go for Christmas : old associations, and other obstacles of that kind. If it had but been open weather, hunting was an excuse for everything." And they almost let him go, poor devil ! he got so melancholy.

But it wanted two days to Christmas, and they had persuaded him that there might be a change still, and there was : for on the day before Christmas Eve there came a letter directed to—

"CAPTAIN LOSELEY," &c. &c.,

which opened his eyes to the advantages of remaining away from his corps.

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I have heard that I am indebted to you for a service which I can never repay. I have waited daily in the hope that I might have been able personally to acknowledge it, but the frost has prevented my riding, and we are not likely to meet while it lasts. Will you therefore waive ceremony, and, if your present engagements permit you to enjoy a week's cover shooting, spend your Christmas-day, and the following week with me ?

"I beg to remain,

"Very sincerely yours,

"HUGO WELTERS,"

"Gorsebury, Dec. 22,"

Is it difficult to guess the result of such a visit? The

old baronet shook the garrison steeplechaser by the hand : introduced him to his friends as the fool who lost the run of the season to save his daughter's life : talked to him of the claims which he had so delicately refrained from pressing. He ended by such a burst of generous enthusiasm in favour of the stranger from Lucerne, as made Lucy the happiest of her father's guests ; and convinced the greatest stickler for icicles and holly berries that the sports of Christmas are as capable of bearing fruit as its pastimes.

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